



AMHS

NOTIZIARIO

CELEBRATING ITALIAN CULTURE & COMMUNITY SINCE 2000

A Publication of the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of the Washington DC Area

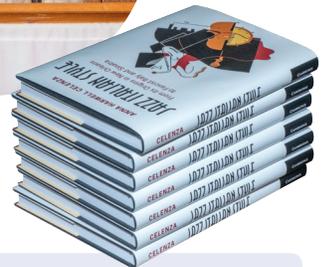
March/April 2019



AMHS members and friends gather before the start of the well attended January meeting



Professor Anna Harwell Celenza of Georgetown University



HOW JAZZ CRISS-CROSSED THE ATLANTIC *From New Orleans to Fascist Italy and Sinatra*

By Nancy DeSanti, 1st Vice president, Programs

Georgetown University Music Professor Anna Harwell Celenza took her audience of about 100 people on a musical voyage across the Atlantic and back as she told us about her book “Jazz Italian Style: From Its Origins in New Orleans to Fascist Italy and Sinatra.” She gave her presentation at our first luncheon program of the year at Casa Italiana on January 27, 2019, which featured a delicious lunch catered by Osteria da Nino.

Who better to explain this fascinating subject than Professor Celenza? She has a Ph.D. in music history from Duke University and is currently a professor of music at Georgetown University, where she teaches courses in music history and radio journalism.

Professor Celenza said she first started thinking about writing “Jazz Italian Style” when she was on a sabbatical in Rome. Her interest in jazz was inspired by her grandfather, who worked briefly as a jazz musician in the big band swing era.

In explaining the largely forgotten Italian connection to jazz, she said she hopes it will interest people who want to know more about music history, Italian-American culture, the Fascist era in Italy, music technology, and the evolution of popular music.

Professor Celenza argues that Italian music had a considerable impact on American jazz, and she elab-

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AMHS NOTIZIARIO

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear members and friends:

We began 2019 in very good fashion. Our general meeting, held on January 27, drew approximately 100 members and guests — clearly one of our more popular events. Those in attendance were not disappointed, as our featured speaker (Professor Anna Harwell Celenza of Georgetown University) and our caterer (Osteria da Nino) lived up to the high expectations. Professor Harwell Celenza's presentation on her book "Jazz Italian Style" was both very informative and extremely interesting, as she wove together strands of Italian and Italian-American history, music and culture — all endlessly fascinating on their own and even more riveting together.

Two of our special guests included Maria Fusco, the Director of Education at the Italian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and Julia Paola, a freshman at George Washington University. Professor Fusco spoke briefly about the important work that the Embassy is carrying out in the promotion of the Italian language and culture. Ms. Paola will be the Society's first formal intern when she begins assisting us later this year, so the meeting provided a good opportunity for her and some members of the Executive Committee (EC) to get to know each other.

Prior to the lunch and presentation, we took care of two very important items of business. AMHS members in attendance, representing our membership at large, unanimously approved by secret ballot an Executive Committee (EC) decision to have our Society become a member of the Casa Italiana Sociocultural Center (CISC) Capital Founders Fund. The Capital Founders Fund consists of a group of donors and supporters committed to the future success of CISC as it begins a new phase in its history. You can find out more about this significant and exciting development in a separate article of this Notiziario. The second item of business was the swearing in of three new EC members: Andrea Balzano, Alfred Del Grosso and Helina Zewdu Nega. I thank them again for their willingness to serve on the Board and make their skills available to the running of the society. I also thank again the members they are replacing (Sarah Scott, Jonathan Stern and Lourdes Tinajero) for their commitment and past contributions and look forward to working with them again.

Our next general meeting will be on March 24th. It will take place at Alfio's La Trattoria, in Chevy Chase, Maryland. This location will be a change for us as our general meetings outside of Casa Italiana have routinely taken place in the recent past at Carmine's. For some background on the decision to alter what has been our recent choice of venue away from Casa Italiana, see the article in this Notiziario. The March meeting will feature AMHS member, videographer and filmmaker Kirsten Keppel, who will present her film on the St. Joseph's Day Table. Kirsten's film on this ancient tradition was a finalist in the Russo Brothers Italian American Film Forum and will be an appropriate topic for the month of March. In addition, spring will have officially sprung by the time Kirsten shows her film, so there will be an additional reason to celebrate. Those who have seen the film have been consistently effusive in their praise. So please mark your calendars for what will undoubtedly be another excellent presentation.

The turnout for our January meeting was indeed gratifying. I encourage you to continue to attend our general meetings, which offer a great way for us to get together, get to know each other, learn something new, and be entertained, while also enjoying a good meal. I apologize to those members who were turned away from the January meeting. We did not order extra meals in advance when we gave our final number to the caterer, so there was some concern about not having enough for everyone. We regret that omission and ask for your understanding. We will build in flexibility with our caterers going forward. That said, please try to register for the meetings before the deadline, which makes things easier for those lending a hand in hospitality. We understand that plans sometimes change, so some last-minute registration is inevitable. However, a late surge of interest the day before a meeting can be hard to manage, as most caterers expect a final count to be final. *Enjoy the Spring!*

*Best regards,
Ray LaVerghetta*

March Meeting Celebrates St. Joseph's Table Tradition

By Nancy DeSanti

Our second program of the year on March 24, 2019, will celebrate the St. Joseph's Table tradition and feature the film



Guest Speaker
Kirsten Keppel

made by AMHS member Kirsten Keppel. Her half-hour film, which was screened by the National Italian American Foundation last March, tells the story of the Tavola di San Giuseppe tradition as passed down

through generations of Italian Americans. Kirsten will also talk about how she made the film and what this special tradition means to the Italian-American community writ large.

Kirsten's film, "Ringraziamenti: The St. Joseph's Table Tradition," was a semi-finalist of the 2017 Russo Brothers Italian American Film Forum and was first shown at the NIAF Gala. She will explain how St. Joseph's Table represents an ancient tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages, as legend has it, to a time when there was an especially severe drought in Sicily. No rain fell for a long time, so no crops would grow and famine was widespread. The people prayed to God for rain, and they also prayed to St. Joseph to intercede with God on their behalf, promising that if God caused it to rain, they would have a special feast in honor of St. Joseph. Miraculously, the rains came and the crops were planted. With the harvest, the people prepared a feast of foods from those crops, and this became known as La Tavola di San Giuseppe. Families prepared huge buffets and invited the less fortunate people of the village, especially the homeless and sick.

Kirsten will tell us how nowadays the tradition is still practiced in Sicily and worldwide, especially in Italian-American communities of Sicilian descent. The St. Joseph's Table tradition was brought to America in the late 19th and early 20th century by Sicilian immigrants to Louisiana, Texas, California, Colorado and New York.

The celebration takes place on or close to St. Joseph's feast day of March 19 and represents hospitality and nurturing in the making and fulfill-



St. Joseph's Table

ing of promises. In Sicily, a society that was kin-oriented and closed to outsiders, the tradition provided a way for the women to open their homes to strangers in an accepted manner as well

as to fulfill the promise made to St. Joseph.

Kirsten will give her presentation at Alfio's La Trattoria in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Afterwards, there will be a question and comment period, and the group is encouraged to share their experience with other traditions.

Please see the flyer on page 11 for details, including the menu. And remember to reserve by **March 21**, as seating is limited to the first 65 people. ■

Venue for March Meeting

By Ray LaVerghetta, AMHS President

As most of our members know, the Society is not able to use Casa Italiana for all of our bimonthly general meetings. For those meetings held elsewhere, we have in recent years patronized Carmine's restaurant in Washington, D.C. However, a number of considerations have compelled us to seek an alternative site.

First, Carmine's has now imposed a guaranteed minimum dollar amount, which means that the AMHS will be charged no less than the minimum, regardless of how many members show up. If turnout is low, then the funds that we collect may fall short of what we have to pay. Indeed, this is exactly what happened the last time; we lost \$461. The society cannot continue to absorb losses of that size.

Second, traffic and parking around Carmine's are always difficult, especially when an event at Capital One arena coincides with our meeting. The Washington Capitals have a home game on the day and time of our next meeting. The last time that happened, nearby garages filled up quickly and street parking was nonexistent.

For these (as well as other) reasons, the Executive Committee has decided to select Alfio's La Trattoria, in Chevy Chase, Maryland, as the venue for our March meeting. As some of our members may recall, we have held events at Alfio's in the past which were very successful. Alfio's will offer us a varied menu, will provide us with three dedicated servers, and will allow us to maintain the same price differential with respect to meals served at Casa Italiana (that is, a price only slightly higher than for meals catered in house). In addition, Alfio's imposes no guaranteed minimum number of guests and no food and beverage minimum; we pay only for the number of guests who show up. Finally, Alfio's provides free valet parking, which eliminates the hassle of trying to find a place to park as well as the cost of a garage. Just as important, Alfio's is delighted to have us back and has been extremely welcoming — a pleasant change for those handling our hospitality arrangements.

Although we enjoyed our past meetings at Carmine's, the circumstances have changed, and now Alfio's appears to be the better choice for our next general meeting on March 24th. ■



SIAMO UNA FAMIGLIA

Lynn Sorbara Honored as 'Wise Woman' at NOIAW Dinner

By Nancy DeSanti

A large group of AMHS members were on hand to cheer for Lynn Sorbara as she was honored as one of the Three Wise Women by the National Organization of Italian American Women (NOIAW.) Lynn and the other two honorees were celebrated at a dinner on January 10, 2019 at Maggiano's in Washington, D.C. Lynn, our AMHS Second Vice President, was recognized for her illustrious career in the medical field.

Lynn is currently the program director for the Cancer Biomarker Research Group in the Division of Cancer Prevention of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In this role, she oversees the Biomarker Reference Laboratory cooperative agreement grants and the Lung Collaborative Group projects. She is the lead program director for a new Consortium for Early Cancer Assessment Using Liquid Biopsy and the divisional representative program director for the NCI Innovative Molecular Analysis Technologies and Small Business Innovation Research Programs. Her impressive portfolio also includes grants focused on biomarkers for hematopoietic malignancies and new technologies for cancer detection.

Before the honorees were called up to the podium, welcoming remarks were made by Diana Femia, president of NOIAW for the Greater Washington Region, and then by Domenico Bellantone, the First Counselor for Consular and Social Affairs of the Embassy of Italy. The emcee for the evening was Gemma Puglisi, a 2016 recipient of the Wise Woman award. Also giving brief remarks was Alyssa O'Connor, a 2015 NOIAW scholarship recipient who is now an attorney with the Federal Reserve Board.

The two other women honored by NOIAW were Dr. Andrea Giacometti and Eve Grimaldi. Dr. Giacometti is a neuroradiologist who won many top awards in her medical field and who now mentors young doctors at Georgetown University's Medical School. She explained that she was born near Gibraltar while her parents were on



Three Wise Women: AMHS VP Lynn Sorbara (center) with Eve Grimaldi (left) and Dr. Andrea Giacometti

board the ship Andrea Doria immigrating to the United States and thus she was named Andrea. Eve Grimaldi has been the dean of students at Georgetown Visitation for over 33 years. She told how, after several faculty members and students' parents were diagnosed with breast cancer, she set out to raise money and raise awareness about breast cancer, with the result that she and her students have raised over \$200,000 for breast cancer research.

Lynn told the audience about growing up in Queens, N.Y. and her career in cancer research, and how her interest in medical research stemmed from her father dying when she was 14 of an illness that should have been easily diagnosed and cured. So after losing her father at this young age, she and her mother had to go to work, and she ended up doing administrative work for Aristotle Onassis' shipping company in New York City, while at the same time getting her education. Eventually Lynn earned her Ph.D. in molecular pharmacology from Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. Later on, she moved to the Washington area and went to work for NIH. Lynn has been a board member and then officer of AMHS for several years, and she is also a parishioner of Holy Rosary Church.

Lynn also spoke about her family's Italian roots (her father was from Polistena, Calabria and her mother was from Resuttana, Sicily, near Caltanissetta), and how when she was growing up in New York, she lived with her grandparents and her cousins down the street were her best friends. In attendance at the dinner honoring

Lynn were some of her NIH colleagues, her brother who came down from New York, and her friends and family members who came from New York and Florida.

Many AMHS members will recall that Lynn gave us a wonderful presentation on September 23, 2017. She spoke about what is going on in the field of cancer research and broke it down in layman's terms. She really wowed the audience with the depth of her knowledge and her ability to communicate it to everyone.

Congratulations Lynn! We are all so proud of you. ■

Passing of Antonio Bianchini

Talented Artist and Long-time AMHS Member

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of our long-time AMHS member Antonio Bianchini, a talented artist and a wonderful friend to many of us. Antonio had been battling cancer and was in hospice care when he passed away on January 2, 2019.

Antonio led a very interesting life. He was born in Tripoli, Libya, where his Italian parents had been living. He grew up in Rome, and then later on in life he studied the art of mosaics in Ravenna, the renowned center of mosaics in Italy. After mastering the techniques of mosaics, Antonio practiced his artistry here in the United States. Set-



Antonio Bianchini and two of his grandchildren stand with the mosaic he crafted for Holy Rosary

tling in the suburban Virginia area, he became a devoted parishioner of Holy Rosary Church, a member of the AMHS for many years, and he was also among the soci of the Circolo della Briscola begun by his friend Dr. Enrico Davoli.

His many friends have wonderful memories of Antonio. His good friend Cecilia Fiermonte recalls that when she first began coming to Holy Rosary years ago and didn't know anyone, Antonio made her feel so welcome. Cecilia recalled that a few years later, she went with Nancy DeSanti to give a presentation on Puglia to a meeting of the Sons of Italy in Fairfax. Antonio came with them, and for this occasion, he made a beautiful mosaic of the trulli in Alberobello which he said took him 45 hours to make. Then he demonstrated to the audience how he used his tools to make his beautiful mosaics using the painstaking technique he learned from the masters. He charmed everyone in the room.

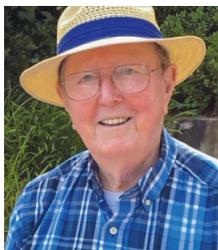
Antonio's mosaics can be found in churches and museums in Europe, including the Madonna he made for a church in Krakow, Poland. The beautiful mosaic of the Madonna and the Baby Jesus which he donated to Holy Rosary was on display in the church during his funeral Mass.

He especially enjoyed attending social events of AMHS and Casa Italiana with his family members, and many of us remember the wonderful magic show he put on for the children at one of our AMHS programs, wearing his magician's black top hat.

We extend our sincerest condolences to the Bianchini family and to his dear friend Bianca Starace. ■

Condolences to AMHS Member Helen Free on the Passing of Her Father

AMHS expresses its heartfelt sympathy to board member Helen Free whose father, Alvin A. Turner, Sr., passed away peacefully at his home on February 6, 2019, four weeks prior to his 90th birthday. Al graduated from Gonzaga College High School in 1948. He retired from the Real Estate Department of PEPCO in 1986 after many years of service. Al



Alvin A. Turner, Sr.

was past Grand Knight of St. Pius X Council of the Knights of Columbus and was instrumental in the founding of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Camp Springs, Maryland. He was active in Prince George's County politics and economic develop-

ment and was particularly proud to have served on the board of Bishop McNamara High School.

Al was the beloved husband of Rosemarie Antonelli Turner for 66 years; loving father of Helen (Douglas) Free, Christine (Buddy) Summers, Andrew (Avis) Turner, Kathryn (Gary) May, Carolyn (Mark) Kulesza, Matthew (Mary) Turner and the late Thomas Turner. He was a wonderful grandfather of 16 and great-grandfather of 6. His family was his pride and joy. *(from the obituary of Alvin A. Turner, Sr., on the Kalas Funeral Home website).* ■

AMHS Membership

By Lynn Sorbara, 2nd Vice President - Membership

OUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

238

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our newest members
Nicola Ciccarello and Mariadina Di Gennaro.

BIRTHDAYS

Compleanni a Marzo

Eileen Parise Del Monaco and Elaine Balducci, March 1; Robert D'Onofrio and Greg Bernabei, March 2; Maria Fresco, March 3; Melis Mull, March 4; Eileen Maturi, March 7; Salvatore DiPilla, March 8; Joseph Sandri, March 9; Maria Kellaher and Sam Yothers, March 12; Mary Petrino, March 14; Lucio Marchegiani, March 16; Justine Petracci Lawson, and Roland Costanzo, March 17; David Scalzitti, March 19; Fiorenza Pasquini and Pam Lupo, March 21; Donald Kellaher, March 22; Mary Katherine Theis, March 25; Lucio D'Andrea and Thomas Guglielmo, PhD, March 28; and Anna Maria DiPilla, March 31.

Compleanni ad Aprile

Eva Del Vecchio, and Albert Grasso, April 1; Joseph Theis, April 4; Susan Ann Bonsiero, April 5; Diana Bernabei, April 6; Donald Kelleher, April 10; James W. Cocco, April 11; Gloria D'Andrea, April 12; Stephen Ulissi, and Elena Francini-McGrann, April 21; Julia Conti, April 22; Peter Iovino, April 24; Belinda Sabatini, April 25; Christopher Renneker, April 26; Joann Novello, April 28; and Tommaso Profenno, April 30.

ANNIVERSARIES

Anniversari a Marzo

Robert & Marlene Lucian, March 3; Albert & Karen Grasso, March 4; and Raymond & Barbara Bernero, March 26.

Anniversari ad Aprile

Vincenzo & Dora Marinucci, April 15; Gino & Lina Marinucci, April 24; and, Roberto & Bess DiTullio, April 25.

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MONTENERODOMO

PROVINCE OF CHIETI, REGION OF ABRUZZO



By Nancy DeSanti

One of Abruzzo's beautiful small towns, Montenerodomo, is located 62 kilometers from Chieti. The town has approximately 770 inhabitants, known as Monteneresi. This ancient center lies on a high rock overlooking the Adriatic to the east and the Majella to the west.

Inhabited since prehistory, it was later an Italic center of the Frentani with the name of Juvanum, and in Roman times it was a municipium. In the Middle Ages it was under the dominion of the Caldoras, and finally the d'Aquinos.

World War II seriously damaged the town center and destroyed the ancient Benedetto Croce family palazzo. Because of Montenerodomo's altitude, it had a view all the way to the Adriatic and was used by the Germans as an observation post. It was almost completely destroyed by the Germans. The fighting in Montenerodomo was part of the assault on the Gustav line, the German defensive line set up in late 1943. After the war, Montenerodomo was recognized for exceptional valor during the war and was decorated with the "Croce di Guerra al Valor Militare" for the sacrifices of its population and partisan fighters during World War II.

A visit to Montenerodomo should include a trip to nearby Juvanum, an important archaeologi-



Panoramic views of Montenerodomo

cal site next to the ruins of the Abbey of Santa Maria del Palazzo. This ancient site on the outskirts of Montenerodomo was founded in the 1st century B.C. Currently, the sanctuary of the 4th century B.C. remains from the Samnite period, with two twin temples and a small theater with scenes and stone steps, among the most beautiful discovered until now in the province of Chieti. The archaeological remains of the Roman era are well preserved and can be visited. At the entrance to the area, there is a museum with 28 panels illustrating the naturalistic and archaeological aspects of the territory. The site is managed by the municipality of Montenerodomo.

The mighty city walls of Juvanum, dating back to the 4th and 5th century B.C., were built at the same time as the city walls of the Montenerodomo settlements, even though these fortifications are more impressive. The megalithic walls around the settlement (mura megalitiche) are situated near a rocky hill and were likely used defensively by the early inhabitants.

Other sites worth visiting in Montenerodomo are the Church of San Vito, built in the 1700s and featuring a beautiful circular window, and the Church of San Martino which dates from the 14th century and has a stone façade with a

MONTENERODOMO

PROVINCIA DI CHIETI, REGIONE ABRUZZO

cornice in the “romanelle” style.

Montenerodomo is the ancestral home of Benedetto Croce, an idealist philosopher, historian and politician who was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature 16 times. Croce’s “On History” sets forth the view of history as “philosophy in motion.”

The town is also the ancestral home of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Her father Thomas D’Alessandro’s father was born in Montenerodomo. Her grandfather Tommaso Fedele D’Alessandro had a common surname in Montenerodomo but the different spelling of a surname was a common occurrence among Italian immigrants who came to America. (Note: Her mother Annunciata Lombardi D’Alessandro was born in Campobasso, Molise, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1911). Speaker Pelosi became the highest-ranking Italian-American in 2007 when she was first elected to the third-highest position in the U.S. Government. ■

What to See

- Megalithic walls around the settlement (Mura Megalitiche)
- Roman remains at Juvanum
- Monastery of Santa Maria di Palazzo, built with a large number of Roman stones
- Remains of the Benedetto Croce home
- Nearby Majella National Park

Important Dates

- **1st week in August** — Feast of Saints Antonio and Fedele da Sigmaringa (the patron saint), with lamb, sausages and prosciutto festivals

Sources:

en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montenerodomo

www.italyheritage.com/regions/abruzzo/chieti/montenerodomo.htm

www.montenerodomo.gov.it

www.altosannio.it/montenerodomo-2

Translated by Maddalena Borea

Una delle più belle cittadine di Abruzzo, Montenerodomo, si trova a circa 62 chilometri da Chieti, il suo capoluogo. Conta 770 abitanti, i quali sono chiamati Monteneresi. Questo antico centro abitato si estende su un’alta roccia, con la vista dell’Adriatico da una parte e della Maiella da un’altra.

Abitato sin da tempi preistorici, fu dapprima Iuvanum e più tardi, sotto i Romani, divenne municipio. Nel Medio Evo fu sotto i Signori Caldoras e più tardi sotto i D’Aquino.

Data la sua altitudine, i tedeschi, durante la seconda guerra mondiale, la usarono come osservatorio e poi la distrussero. Distrussero anche la dimora del famoso filosofo Benedetto Croce. Finita la guerra, la città ricevè dei riconoscimenti per il suo eroismo durante i feroci attacchi da parte dei tedeschi. Ricevette la Croce di Guerra al Valore Militare.

Una visita a Montenerodomo dovrebbe includere anche una visita a Iuvanum, centro archeologico accanto alle rovine dell’Abbazia di Santa Maria di Palazzo. Questo antichissimo luogo, nei pressi di Montenerodomo, fu stabilito nel primo secolo prima di Cristo. Al presente si può avere accesso anche alle rovine di un santuario sannita del quarto secolo prima di Cristo, e a due piccoli tempi con un teatro con scene e con gradini di pietra.

Accessibili sono anche le antiche rovine romane. All’entrata di questi centri archeologici si trova un museo che, attraverso ventotto pannelli, illustra le caratteristiche naturali ed archeologiche del territorio. Le robuste mura di Juvanum risalgono al quarto e al quinto secolo prima di Cristo. Altre attrazioni includono le chiese di San Vito del 1700, con la sua finestra circolare, e di San Martino, del quattordicesimo secolo, con la sua facciata in pietra e



Montenerodomo

la sua cornice in stile romanesco.

Questa cittadina diede i Natali al filosofo Benedetto Croce, e agli antenati di una delle donne più importanti degli Stati Uniti: Nancy Pelosi. Nancy Pelosi divenne l’italo americana più importante quando ricevè la carica di Presidente della Camera. ■

Attrazioni del luogo:

- Le mura megalitiche
- I resti romani a Juvanum
- Monastero di Santa Maria di Palazzo, costruito con pietre romane
- Monastero di Santa Maria di Palazzo, costruito con pietre romane
- Il vicino parco nazionale della Maiella

Date da ricordare:

- **Prima settimana di Agosto** — Festa di Sant’Antonio e San Fedele, Santo Patrono con agnello, salsicce, prosciutto ed altre leccornie del luogo



ORATINO

PROVINCE OF CAMPOBASSO, REGION OF MOLISE

By Nancy DeSanti

The beautiful little town of Oratino is located about 7 kilometers west of Campobasso along the Biferno River. The town has approximately 1,326 inhabitants.

Oratino is rated among the “Borghi più belli d’Italia”, thanks to its castle and fine monuments. It is built on a limestone cliff overlooking the valley of the Biferno River.

Local historians say the name of the town was originally Loretinum or Lauretum (meaning “small wood of laurel”). The first documented existence of the town dates back to the 13th century. The feudal succession was quite complex and not characterized by the presence of a single family. Its first recorded feudal lord was Eustachio D’Ardicourt in 1268. When the Anjou took possession of southern Italy, in 1326, King Roberto d’Angiò gave the fiefdom to his wife Sancia. Unfortunately, the old town center, located in the valley, was abandoned due to a disastrous earthquake in the 15th century.

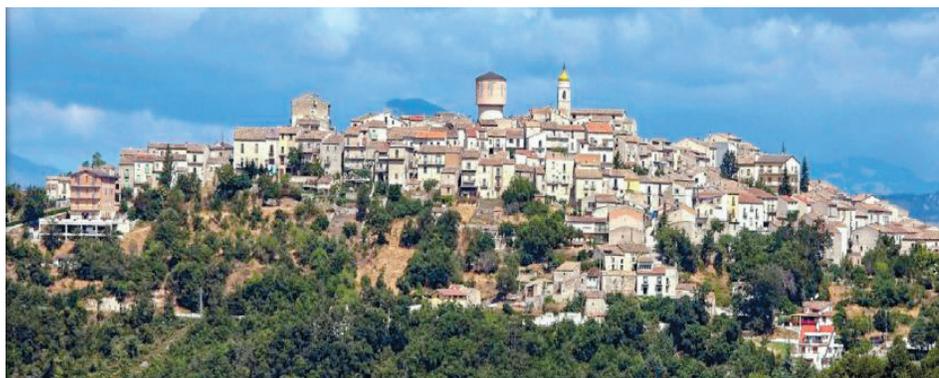
During the first half of the 17th century, under the rule of Giuseppe Giordano, the town became a center of the arts. Buildings were embellished by the skillful work of local artists that make the town unique in the region. It is said that few other towns in Molise have had such a high concentration of artists and craftsmen.

Among the places in Oratino which are well worth seeing are the Palazzo Giordano built as a fortified castle in the 14th century; the Church



La Rocca di Oratino with its square tower

Buildings were embellished by the skillful work of local artists. It is said that few other towns in Molise have had such a high concentration of artists and craftsmen.



A panoramic view of Oratino

of Santa Maria Assunta with a fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin by Ciriaco Brunetti completed in 1791; and the Church of Santa

Maria di Loreto which dates back to the 18th century. That church features decorations of the brothers Ciriaco and Stanislao Brunetti from 1757. This typical countryside church has three altars, the central one entitled to Madonna del Loreto, the left one dedicated to San Rocco and the right one to San Sebastiano. Also featured is a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary by 17th century sculptor Carmine Latessa.

And visitors should definitely not miss seeing La Rocca di Oratino, not far from the town, and the panorama of the Biferno Valley that it offers. La Rocca features a square tower located on a rocky spur — all that is left of a castle and the nearby medieval village after an earthquake in 1456. In fact, in 2004, Sergio Castellitto shot scenes from his film: “Non ti muovere” (Don’t

ORATINO

PROVINCIA DI CAMPOBASSO, REGIONE MOLISE



A street view from Oratino

Move) with Penelope Cruz in Molise and in one scene of traveling by car, you can see the fortress. (Note: Penélope Cruz learned Italian for the role, earned critical acclaim for her performance and won the David di Donatello award). ■

What to See

- Palazzo Ducale
- Church of Santa Maria Assunta
- Church of Santa Maria del Loreto with inside frescoes by local painters Ciriaco and Stanislao Brunetti.
- “La Rocca” with a square tower dating back to the 10th century

Important Dates

- **December 24** — Faglia

Sources:

en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oratino

www.madeinsouthitalytoday.com/oratino.php

[mail.google.com/mail/#label/AMHS+A%26M+articles/FMfcgwxwBVMnDJMJStmgdTjLsgLWIMJfr](mailto:AMHS+A%26M+articles/FMfcgwxwBVMnDJMJStmgdTjLsgLWIMJfr)

www.enchantingitaly.com/regions/molise/province-campobasso/oratino.htm

www.madeinsouthitalytoday.com/oratino.php

Translated by Maddalena Borea

La bellissima cittadina di nome Oratino si trova a circa sette chilometri da Campobasso, il capoluogo della regione Molise, e nei pressi del fiume Biferno.

Conta circa 1,326 abitanti, ed è conosciuta come uno dei borghi più belli d'Italia, grazie ai suoi monumenti, al suo castello e alla sua posizione panoramica sulla vallata del fiume Biferno.

Gli storici attribuirebbero il suo nome a Loretinum o Lauretum (piccolo alloro). Le prime testimonianze della sua esistenza sono del tredicesimo secolo, e la successione di suoi governanti è alquanto complessa fino al 1268, quando la cittadina venne al comando di Eustachio D'Ardicourt. Quando gli angioini presero possesso del sud Italia, il territorio passò al governo di Sancia, moglie di Roberto d'Angiò. Sfortunatamente il centro della città fu abbandonato a causa di un disastroso terremoto nel quindicesimo secolo.

Durante la prima metà del diciassettesimo secolo, sotto Giuseppe Giordano, Oratino divenne un importante centro artistico, grazie alla presenza di molti artisti del luogo, e, fra le attrazioni che offre dobbiamo ricordare il Palazzo Giordano, una vera fortezza del quattordicesimo secolo, la chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta, con un affresco dell'Assunzione, eseguito da Ciriaco Brunetti, che lo terminò nel 1791.

Da visitare è anche la chiesa di Santa Maria di Loreto con affreschi dei fratelli Brunetti. Questa tipica chiesa di campagna ha tre altari. Quello centrale dedicato alla Vergine di Loreto. Quello a sinistra dedicato a San Rocco, e quello a destra dedicato a San Sebastiano. Custodisce anche una bellissima scultura della Madonna del Rosario del diciassettesimo secolo, eseguita da Carmine Latessa.

Ai visitatori si raccomanda di non mancare di visitare la Rocca, non distante dal centro abitato. La rocca, parte delle rovine di un castello distrutto da un terremoto, offre ai visitatori una bellissima vista della vallata del Biferno. Nel



Chiesa della Madonna di Loreto

film del 2004, “Non ti muovere”, con Penelope Cruz, Castellitto offrì, agli amanti del cinema, magnifici paesaggi con la veduta della vallata dalla Rocca. L'italiano di Penelope fu apprezzato e il film vinse il Davide di Donatello. ■

Attrazioni del luogo:

- Il palazzo ducale
- La chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta
- Chiesa di Santa Maria del Loreto con gli affreschi dei fratelli Brunetti
- La rocca con la sua torre che risale al decimo secolo.

Date da ricordare:

- **24 dicembre** — Faglia

HOW JAZZ CRISS-CROSSED THE ATLANTIC:

From New Orleans to Fascist Italy and Sinatra

▼ *Continued from page 1*

orated on how jazz landed in Italy with the U.S. Army in World War I, flourished under Mussolini and then here in America during the 1930s, and influenced Frank Sinatra and the post-war generation including Dean Martin and Tony Bennett.

The author explained that jazz is an art form that originated in America at the hands of African-American musicians. But she noted that the first commercial jazz recording was made by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band whose leader was Nick LaRocca, an Italian-American.

She noted that when Italian immigrants came to America, New Orleans was an important point of entry in the late 19th century, even more so than New York, and that ragtime was already popular in the Crescent City. Professor Celenza pointed out that the “second line” in New Orleans, with the marching bands, owes a lot to the tradition of the funeral processions in Sicily.

The Northern Italian influence was more prevalent on the West Coast. In San Francisco, for example, Guido Pietro Deiro immigrated from Torino in the early 1900s and became a noted musician and vaudeville performer in California who introduced the accordion. He married movie star Mae West and together they popularized dances such as the shimmy along with the jazz tunes that accompanied it. The shimmy soon found its way into the nightclubs and dance halls of Northern Italy.

When jazz arrived in Italy at the end of World War I, it quickly became part of the local music culture. In Italy, thanks to the gramophone and radio, many Italian listeners didn't notice a performer's national and ethnic identity. So Nick LaRocca (Italian-American), Gorni Kramer (Italian), the Trio Lescano (Jewish-Dutch), and Louis



President Ray LaVerghetta welcomes members and guests



New board members (left to right) Alfred Del Grosso, Andrea Balzano and Helina Zewdu Nega



Board member Jeff Clark (left) chats with David Ciummo

Armstrong (African-American), to name a few, all found equal footing in the Italian music world.

In 1920s Rome, jazz clubs began to flourish, and one of the popular ones was *Cabaret del Diavolo* (Devil's Cabaret). The club was laid out on three floors in imitation of Dante's *Divina Comedia*, with *Paradiso* on the top floor, *Purgatorio* on the level below, and the *Inferno* in the basement.

The professor explained that when Benito Mussolini came to power, he saw jazz as a way to reach the young people, and so on fascist radio, 20 minutes of music would be interspersed with five minutes of speeches. Jazz was embraced as a sign of youth and modernity. It is probably not well known that Benito Mussolini's son Romano was an internationally recognized jazz pianist who played with Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton and Dizzy Gillespie. Mussolini's son Vittorio was a well-known jazz guitarist. And Mussolini himself played the trombone and then the violin and was a music reviewer for a socialist newspaper when he was in his 20's.

The most famous singers in Italy during Mussolini's time were Natalino Otto and the Trio Lescano. Natalino Otto has been called the Frank Sinatra of Italy but Professor Celenza said the opposite would be more accurate, since Otto began sing-

ing professionally several years before Sinatra. Both had a lyrical brilliance, a fluid rhythmic sense, a distinctive phrasing style — and good looks too.

For a time Otto, who was born near Genoa, worked as a dance band musician for a transatlantic ship. He made 34 crossings between Genoa and New York. Each time he was in New York he made it a point to visit jazz locales and he often performed on Italian-American radio station WOV which was popular in the New York-New Jersey area. He even cut his first record there. According to the professor, what made Sinatra's sound so distinctive in the late 1930s was his adherence to the Northern Italian jazz style created by Otto, who also incorporated Northern Italian folk music into his singing. She thinks that hearing singers like Otto had a profound effect on Sinatra's approach to singing.

Meanwhile, the racial laws enacted in Italy in 1938 did not, however, affect one of Mussolini's favorite groups — the Trio Lescano made up of three Jewish sisters from the Netherlands (another Jewish group was not so fortunate, and they ended up in Auschwitz).

Professor Celenza closed with a rendition of “Torna a Surriento” first by Frank Sinatra and then by Dean Martin. Suffice it to say that Sinatra's Neapolitan accent left something to be desired compared to Dean Martin's beautiful version recorded a few months later. The professor noted that singers such as Tony Bennett, Louis Prima, Perry Como and Dean Martin all could sing in Italian (which they spoke in the home) although they generally performed in English. AMHS Vice President Lynn Sorbara commented afterwards that her father took art classes with Tony Bennett in New York and he used to listen to him singing in Italian (Lynn is also related to Nick La Rocca).

We thank all those who helped serve the lunch, those who donated raffle prizes and those who bought raffle tickets, which brought in \$229 for the Society. ■

AMHS Joins CISC Founders, To Sponsor Vespa Rally

By Ray LaVerghetta, AMHS President

The Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society (AMHS) has become a member of the Casa Italiana Sociocultural Center (CISC) Capital Founders Fund. AMHS membership, as represented by those attending our January 27th General Meeting, unanimously approved a decision by the AMHS Executive Committee to join the Founders. The Capital Founders Fund is a group of committed individuals or organizations who have donated or pledged at least \$5,000 to CISC, as the latter begins a new phase of its history and broadens its influence in the Italian and Italian-American communities.

Joining the CISC Capital Founders Fund will have positive consequences for both the AMHS and the CISC. The renovated facilities and expanded programs of the CISC will benefit the collective community of Italians and Italian-Americans in Washington, D.C., of which we are a part. For the CISC, having a committed supporter in its camp, working with likeminded individuals and organizations, will help to ensure the vitality of its role and programs going forward.

The AMHS sees its Capital Founders status as a way to give back to Casa Italiana for its hospitality over the years, as a way to support and sustain CISC's new programs and projects, and as a way to cement our relationship with CISC as the two organizations move forward in the coming years.

As you may know, the Vespa Committee of Washington, D.C. is organizing the Vespa Rally (Raduno) for 2019. It will take place the weekend of September 20-22 at the CISC and surrounding area. The AMHS is now an official sponsor of the rally and will have a special role to play in one of its events: the presentation in honor of Corradino Ascanio, who designed the Vespa in 1946 and who was born in Popoli, province of Pescara, in Abruzzo. The presentation will occur at the Crespelle breakfast at Casa Italiana on Saturday morning. The rally will also include a welcome reception on Friday evening, featuring an arrosticini barbecue and drinks, Kennedy Center "Reach" concerts, and, of course, Vespa rides. It looks to be a fun weekend, in which the AMHS will also hold its September General Meeting. So be sure to mark your calendars! ■



Please join us for a wonderful program during which we will view a short film by Kirsten Keppel entitled "Ringraziamenti: The St. Joseph's Table Tradition," followed by her talk about how she made the film, how the tradition came about, and what this beautiful tradition means to the Italian-American community. After the presentation, the audience is encouraged to share their experiences with other similar traditions.

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 24
1:00 PM**

at Alfio's La Trattoria
4515 Willard Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
FREE VALET PARKING!

MENU

A choice of Eggplant Parmigiana, Lasagna al Forno, Chicken Dorati, or Broiled Filet of Flounder; salad, bread & butter, and dessert.

Beverages include water, coffee, tea. Alcoholic beverages for individual purchase only.

COST

\$30.00 members | **\$35.00** non-members.

We encourage you to PAY ONLINE,
using **Visa or Mastercard**, at
www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org
(See "Upcoming Events" on the home page)

***Paid reservations must be received by
5:00PM on March 21.
No payments at the door.
Seating is limited to 65, so reserve Early!***

For questions on the program, please contact Nancy DeSanti (703) 967-2169.
For questions about reservations, please contact Maria D'Andrea-Yothers (703) 473-4033.

✂ **Return with Payment**

PAID RESERVATIONS for AMHS General Society Meeting on Sunday, March 24, 2019

Please make check payable to AMHS.
Send to AMHS, c/o Peter Bell, 328 8th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20002

Name(s): _____

Phone: _____

Guest(s): _____

Number Attending: _____ **Check Amount:** _____

Email: _____

2019 CALENDAR of EVENTS



New Venue!

LUNCHEON MEETING

The Tradition of ST. JOSEPH'S TABLE

With guest speaker
Kirsten Keppel,

AMHS Member and filmmaker of
"Ringraziamenti: The St. Joseph's Table Tradition"

See details on page 3 & 11

RESERVATION DEADLINE: March 21

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

General Society Meeting

1:00pm | Alfio's Trattoria,
Chevy Chase, MD

SUNDAY, JUNE 9

General Society Meeting

1:00pm | Casa Italiana

SUNDAY, JULY 28

General Society Meeting

1:00pm | Casa Italiana

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11

Ferragosto Picnic

3:00pm | Fort Ward Park,
Alexandria, VA

SEPTEMBER 20-22

2019 Vespa Rally

details to come

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

General Society Meeting

1:00pm | Restaurant TBA

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Annual Wine Tasting

1:00pm | Casa Italiana



www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org



THE ABRUZZO AND MOLISE HERITAGE SOCIETY

of the Washington, DC Area

Celebrating Italian Culture & Community since 2000

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