



AMHS

# NOTIZIARIO

CELEBRATING ITALIAN CULTURE & COMMUNITY SINCE 2000

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

November/December 2021



*Socially distant but still social at the October 3 general meeting.*

## CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI

### *is Topic of First In-person AMHS Event in Nearly Two Years*

By **Nancy DeSanti**, 1st Vice President-Programs

Our first in-person event in nearly two years was, by all accounts, a big success. On October 3, 2021, 50 AMHS members and guests enjoyed a very informative talk by Steven Livengood, an expert on Constantino Brumidi, “the Michelangelo of the Capitol,” and mentor to our late AMHS member Joe Grano, who worked tirelessly to help gain recognition for Brumidi.

The Society’s last in-person event was on January 26, 2020, so we waited a long time to get together again for a delicious lunch and terrific speaker. In fact, Steve had previously accepted our invitation for May 2020, but that was not to be. So we were very pleased to welcome him.

We were also happy to have had as our guests the two new priests at Holy Rosary Church — Father Peter Paul Polo and Father Sergio dall’Agnese. And we were very pleased that our speaker came with four colleagues from the U.S. Capitol Historical Society — Jane Campbell, president and CEO, Yianni Varonis, communications director, Tom Marabello, education specialist, and long-time volunteer Barbara Thompson.

*continued on 15*

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## AMHS NOTIZIARIO

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear members and friends:

With Thanksgiving just weeks away, we are well into fall and headed toward the holiday season. This year's holiday festivities should be a little brighter and a little closer to normal than last year's, thanks to the progress made in halting the spread of COVID. While the battle is far from over, the situation is much improved — something else for which to be grateful at our Thanksgiving table.

Speaking of gratitude, many of us felt exactly that emotion on October 3, when we gathered at the Casa Italiana Sociocultural Center (CISC) for our first in-person general meeting in over 20 months. Our guest speaker was Steven Livengood, the Director of Public Programs at the United States Capitol Historical Society and the Chief Visitor Guide to the U.S. Capitol. His presentation showed us how Constantino Brumidi, the Italian-born "Michelangelo of the Capitol," transformed the building's walls into stunning murals and how he painted the 4,664 square foot "eye" of the rotunda. It was yet another striking illustration of how Italian immigrants have contributed to the culture and fabric of their adopted country. Mr. Livengood's talk was very well received and prompted numerous questions and comments from those in attendance. The event, which was coordinated with the CISC and the Italian American Museum of Washington, D.C. (IAMDC), featured the catering of Fontina Grille, which did its usual wonderful job of preparing our food. We hope that this informative and entertaining afternoon marked the first step in returning to our in-person bimonthly general meetings.

Plans are under consideration for a second general meeting this year, to be held on December 5. We have not yet finalized details, but stay tuned for additional information that will arrive at your electronic inbox shortly.

On October 11, some of our members attended the Columbus Day events at the Christopher Columbus statue in front of Union Station in Washington, D.C. As in the past, the AMHS was a supporter of the event and our ad appeared in the program's booklet.

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) held its 46th Anniversary Gala dinner at the Omni Shoreham Hotel on October 23. This year NIAF celebrated Abruzzo as its region of honor.

You should have received by now in the traditional mail your ballots for voting on the slate of officers and Board members for the upcoming term. Please be sure to return them in the enclosed stamped and labeled envelopes by November 30. Your participation signals your interest and engagement in the Society and your support for its leadership.

In December, you will receive the annual scholarship fundraising booklet and letter. The booklet demonstrates how our funding has grown over the years and acknowledges the generosity of our donors. All the funds underpinning our scholarships come from our own fundraising, so the campaign is important. In my view, the best way to preserve our Italian heritage and pass it on to future generations is through the scholarship program. The program awards students who have not only achieved academic excellence but who have also demonstrated an active interest in the Italian language and Italian culture. They will be the ones in the future to carry the banner of the Italian language and culture in the country to which many of their ancestors immigrated. By growing their expertise in Italian and deepening their familiarity with Italy's customs and values, they will be in a position to promote them among their colleagues, employees, friends and families. The scholarship program puts into practice the reasons behind the creation of our Society. It may very well be the most important thing our organization does. So please consider supporting it.

I wish all of our members a happy and healthy holiday season. Stay safe and enjoy the blessings that we have at this time of the year.

Regards,  
Ray LaVerghetta

# History and Cuisine of My Ancestral Hometown

By Cathy Branciaroli

**G**ulianova in the Province of Teramo in the Region of Abruzzo, is a seaside/seaport town of 23,000 along the Adriatic coast whose history dates back to the Romans. It is also the town from which my family emigrated in the 1920s, making their way to the United States.

Flanked to the West by the Apennine Mountains whose height rivals the Swiss Alps, Giulianova has remained an isolated area which served to preserve old traditions. The town's patron saint is San Flaviano, bishop of Constantinople. The ship carrying his remains ran aground on the town's coast and the residents saw this as a sign. The town itself is named for Duke Giuliano Antonio Acquaviva who controlled the town long ago and who built eight towers and a moat (now gone) circling the city, which provided security.

The town is perched on two elevations, one of which, the *lido*, is the coastal plain. This is the resort and seaport part of the town today. The second, the *paese*, is the higher inland elevation near the mountains which was the site of the original medieval town. The main feature that struck me on visiting Giulianova was the Piazza della Liberta at the coastal end of the town on its main street, the Corso Garibaldi. It features a very large statue of King Victor Emmanuel II, the first king of Italy, which commemorates his visit in 1860 on his way to a meeting with Giuseppe Garibaldi. The statue was designed and sculpted by Raffaeto Paglietti, who was born in Giulianova and famous throughout Italy at the time.

There are many churches in Giulianova, the most striking of which is Sanctuary of the Madonna della Splendor, featuring clusters of mosaics highlighted with gold leaf. There are stories of the



*The church of San Flaviano honors Giulianova's patron saint, who was the bishop of Constantinople.*

Photo courtesy of Italian Tourist Bureau.

Virgin Mary appearing to a peasant at the spot that is now the location of the Sanctuary. Today, Capuchin monks maintain a monastery there.

Fishing is a major pursuit in Giulianova and the boats venture out almost every day, mostly in pursuit of the larger fish that populate the Adriatic. Their nets hang to dry along the seaside promenade. There also are traditional fishing huts along the waterfront which are home to the big rigs which pursue larger catches. Fish stews, grilled fish and other simple seafood dishes are mainstays of the local diet.

Due to the nearby mountains, shepherds continue their traditional practices, and lamb dishes prepared by them are another main culinary component. Wine production is also a hearty local pursuit, as Giulianova has an ideal climate for the area's three signature wines, Trebbiano red and white, and the Montepulciano varieties.

Cuisine *povera* featuring fresh ingredients is the hallmark of cooking in Giulianova, but the dishes are elegant enough to serve to guests. The local cuisine has three parts, cuisine of the sea, the Gran Sasso heartland and the Apennine moun-

tains. The famous pasta of the town is Pasta alla Chitarra, named because its long square edged strands are made using a device that resembles the strings of a guitar. The resulting pasta is served with tomato sauce and meatballs. Few cookbooks featuring the local cuisine exist and people mostly have collected and shared family recipes as a way of passing down traditions. My own family came to America with those recipes embedded in their heads, and I was lucky enough to have my grandmother show me how to make her favorites.

I'm very proud of my grandparents for making the voyage to an unknown country, especially my grandmother who travelled solo with a baby. I'm also proud that they refused to Americanize our family name, holding on to Branciaroli when so many other relatives who also came to the U.S. became "Branch."

Since most of us don't have a chitarra device, I'm sharing our family recipe for Pizzelles, which requires a device resembling a waffle iron which may be easier to find. A waffle iron can substitute but the wafers will not be as pretty.

## Pizzelles

6 eggs  
4 cups flour (approx.)  
1 1/3 cup sugar  
1 cup melted butter  
4 tsp baking powder  
2 tbl anise  
Juice of 1 orange  
1 tbs lemon juice

Beat eggs in a medium bowl. Add sugar gradually & beat until smooth. Add cooled butter, anise. Add flour, baking powder gradually to beaten egg mixture & then fruit juices. Dough will be sticky. Drop by spoonful onto a heated pizzelle iron & close lid. Cook till lightly browned and remove from iron to a dry towel to cool.

## Sources:

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Photos are from Italy History Inc.

*Cathy Branciaroli is a Delaware-based, award-winning food writer and a member of the AMHS. Her website, Delaware Girl Eats, has been honored nationally for its enticing posts and its narratives about the stories behind the dishes being featured. ■*



*Sitting astride the Adriatic Sea, Giulianova is a popular summer beach destination for tourists.*

Photo courtesy of Italian Tourist Bureau.

# WE REMEMBER

## *Honoring Italian Americans on WWII Active Duty and the Home Front*

*(Editor's note — On Veterans Day 2021, we remember and honor the many Italian Americans who served their country during World War II. In this issue, we are fortunate to have the stories — both submitted by AMHS members — of the heroism of a prominent Naval officer and of a family that kept the home fires burning under difficult circumstances.)*

### Earl Trosino

By Joseph "Sonny" Scafetta, Jr.

Earl Trosino was the second of nine children of Angelo Michele Trosino and his wife, Domenica Rosa Bozzi. Earl was born on December 29, 1906, in Port Deposit, Maryland. His father had emigrated from the city of Benevento (population 58,418 in the 2020 Census) in the province of the same name in the region of Campania. His mother had emigrated from the city of Teramo (population 54,338 in the 2017 Census) in the province of the same name in the region of Abruzzo. The family moved to the city of Chester, a suburb of Philadelphia, in 1910.

Earl left Chester Senior High School at 16 and enrolled in the Pennsylvania Nautical School aboard the U.S.S. Annapolis stationed at the U.S. Navy Yard in Philadelphia to study marine engineering for the U.S. Maritime Service. He graduated in 1928 and married his childhood sweetheart, Lucia Bianca DiRenzo, a theater cashier. They had no children.

*In 1959, Trosino became one of the first Italian Americans to achieve the rank of rear admiral in the U.S. Navy.*

Trosino obtained his license from the U.S. Coast Guard as an assistant engineer in the U.S. Maritime Service and applied for a commission as an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve. By 1932, he had upgraded his license to chief engineer and worked for the Sun Oil Co. in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania. In 1938, he was finally accepted into the U.S. Naval Reserve and was granted a commission as a senior lieutenant. In 1939, he



Earl Trosino (1906-2001)

and his wife joined the Christopher Columbus Lodge No. 612 of the Order of the Sons (and now Daughters) of Italy in America.

In June 1941, Trosino received orders to report for active duty in the U.S. Navy. His first assignment was assistant engineering officer aboard the U.S.S. Alcione under conversion in the Boston Naval Yard. In August 1941, his ship joined an all-navy convoy transporting soldiers and supplies to Iceland. Enroute, the convoy came under attack by a German U-boat wolf pack. There was no damage or ship loss because protective depth charges were dropped by U.S. Navy escort destroyers. Thus, Trosino engaged in combat action before the United States formally entered World War II in December 1941.

Trosino was promoted to lieutenant commander after being assigned to the U.S.S. Long Island which was the first aircraft carrier converted from a merchant ship at the Sun Ship Yard in Chester. While on board the carrier, he was injured in an explosion. After he recovered,

Trosino was ordered to help bring back a scuttled German luxury liner, the S.S. Windhuk, from Brazil so that it could be transformed into a troop transport, christened the U.S.S. General Lejeune, at the Norfolk Navy Yard in Virginia. Trosino was next assigned to the U.S.S. Guadalcanal, a new aircraft carrier, and was promoted to full commander.

While serving on the Guadalcanal, Trosino would engage in a harrowing encounter with a German submarine that would earn him a prestigious military decoration and help change the course of the war [See sidebar on page 5].

After being detached from the U.S.S. Guadalcanal, Trosino was attached to the U.S.S. Wasp in the Pacific fleet. It was a front-line fighting aircraft carrier with about 100 planes and 3,000 sailors on board. After the war ended in August 1945, the carrier returned to the U.S. east coast. It then took Italian prisoners of war back to Naples and picked up American soldiers to return them home. Trosino was discharged from active duty in 1946, but continued to serve in the U.S. Naval Reserve. In 1949, he was promoted to captain.

In 1954 at the age of 47, Trosino and his wife adopted two orphaned half brothers from Italy. Later that year, Trosino escorted the U-505 on a tow trip from the Portsmouth Naval Yard in New Hampshire through the Saint Lawrence Seaway and three of the great lakes to the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. The last 800 feet were traveled over land one night from a floating dry dock in Lake Michigan across a highway to the museum which had been built as the Fine Arts Building of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The exhibit of the U-505 is dedicated to the memory of about 55,000 American naval service personnel who went down to unmarked ocean graves helping to win victories for the United States.

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*continued on 6*

## Fateful Encounter: *The Guadalcanal and the U-Boat*

On June 4, 1944, while Rome was being liberated by allied forces, the U.S.S. Guadalcanal was the command ship of task group 22.3 engaged in anti-submarine warfare for the Atlantic fleet. About 150 miles off Cape Blanco of French West Africa, an escort destroyer, the U.S.S. Chatelain, made sonar contact with a German submarine. It was later identified as the U-505, a large-class German vessel of the IX-C type.

Task Force Captain Daniel V. Gallery gave an order to try to capture the sub by forcing it to the surface with depth charges from the U.S.S. Chatelain and with machine gun fire from two Wildcat fighter planes flying off the U.S.S. Guadalcanal. When the sub was damaged, the German U-boat captain gave an order to surface and abandon the crippled but still underway vessel. In the ensuing fire fight with the two planes and the escort destroyer, one German was killed and 16 were wounded out of the 59 men on board. No Americans were killed or injured.

Lieutenant Albert David, the engineering officer from another escort destroyer, the U.S.S. Pillsbury, then led an armed boarding party of nine sailors into the sub interior where they found no one aboard. In the meantime, Captain Gallery ordered 37-year-old Commander Trosino to take a crew of specialized service men to board and salvage the sinking U-boat, even though Trosino had never been inside a submarine before. Taking eight hand-picked sailors with him in a motorized whale boat, Trosino and the group headed for the German sub. Upon reaching the U-505, due to the inexperience of the boat crew in rough waters, a large wave lifted them onto the forward deck of the sub and the sailors jumped out. The next wave capsized the boat and all of their salvage equipment, except for a camera and a first aid kit, were dumped into the ocean.

Since the U-boat was still going underway in a wide circle and settling lower by the stern, i.e. the aft end, in the water, an impassable area of ocean water was created between the bow and the conning tower. To reach the conning



*The captured German U-505 submarine now sits in the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.*

tower and gain access into the vessel, Trosino grabbed the radio aerial wire strung from the conning tower to the bow and pulled himself hand over hand through the battering waves up to the top of the conning tower.

Meeting with Lieutenant David, Trosino went below into the slowly sinking sub, leaving his men safe topside. With his knowledge of technical German, he was able to identify different devices on the bulkheads in each area of the vessel. Aware that perhaps some of the time-delay demolition charges set by the Germans had not been found and deactivated by David's armed boarding party, Trosino and David nevertheless decided to risk stopping the electric propulsion motors. When the motors stopped turning the twin propellers, the U-boat settled deeper by the stern. Trosino and David saw bilge water rising up the aft bulkhead in the propulsion control room. Realizing that the sub had sunk deeper than anticipated, Trosino went out to request a tow to aquaplane the sub so that ocean water would not cascade down the hatch when opened.

Returning below, Trosino saw that an eight-inch diameter strainer was the source of the water rising over the floor plates in the control room because its cover had been replaced

without its gasket by the men of David's armed boarding party. Since the gasket was nowhere to be found, Trosino located a T-wrench and secured the water stop valve, removed the cover, and made a temporary gasket out of his undershirt. The sub then stopped sinking.

For their heroism, David was awarded the Medal of Honor and Trosino received the Legion of Merit with a V (earned during combat). The nine sailors in the armed boarding party also received medals. This event was the first time since 1815 that the words "Away boarders!" were heard in the U.S. Navy, meaning that a boarding party was leaving an American ship to capture an enemy man-of-war in combat.

As the sub was being towed towards Bermuda, ten mail bags and a sea chest were dispatched by an escort destroyer to Washington, D.C. They were filled with captured documents, including secret German radio codes for directing U-boat operations. Electric torpedoes, which left no tell-tale wakes, were also recovered from the sub. Information about them provided some of the most valuable intelligence captured in World War II and helped to shorten the war in Europe. ■

▼ *Earl Trosino continued from page 4*

In January 1959, Trosino was promoted to rear admiral. He was one of the first Italian Americans to achieve this high rank in the U.S. Navy. He then retired from the U.S. Naval Reserve in April 1959 at the age of 52 to live with his wife and to raise their two adopted sons in their home in Springfield, Pennsylvania.

On January 1, 1964, he retired as chief engineer for the Sun Oil Co. His wife died in August 1992 after 64 years of marriage. Trosino died on December 8, 2001, three weeks shy of his 96th birthday, in Brinton Manor Nursing Home in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. He was buried with full military honors in Saints Peter & Paul Catholic Cemetery in Marple, Pennsylvania.

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## One Family's Italian Immigrant Experience Before and During World War II

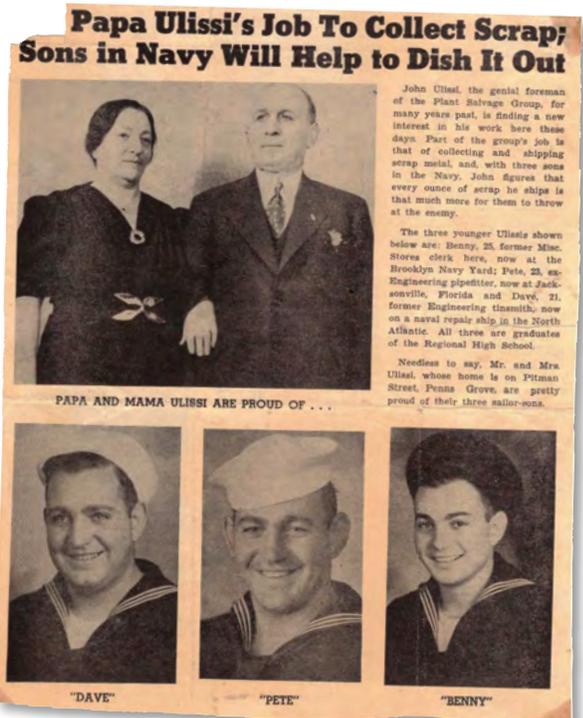
By Stephen Mark Ulissi

**M**y grandmother, Lucia Scorraneese was born in 1891, one of seven children living in grinding poverty on the outskirts of Valle San Giovanni, a small village of about 1000 people located in the Abruzzi Region of central Italy. *[Editor's note — Abruzzo and Molise were formerly one region know as the Abruzzi.]*

Lucia never attended school, could neither read nor write, and spent her teen years doing domestic chores and assisting her father, Paolo, and the family in caring for a small plot of land as tenant farmers. Life was hard. As a young girl she took a liking to her close neighbor, Giovanni Ulissi, who immigrated to America when Lucia was just 10. While in America Giovanni was drafted into the Italian military and returned to his native land to fulfill this obligation. Giovanni and Lucia's feelings for each other blossomed. Lucia quickly accepted Giovanni's marriage proposal even though it would mean following her spouse to a distant land and likely never again seeing her family and close friends.

Lucia adapted well to her new life in the United States. Her sister, Emilia, lived nearby and just about everyone on her street spoke the Abruzzi dialect. Lucia never learned English as there was little reason to do so with so many paesani nearby. Life was good knowing her husband had a steady employment as the manager of a DuPont company salvage yard. Lucia enjoyed things that would have been just a dream in Italy — real shoes from a store rather than wooden-sole clogs and dresses made with brand new cloth. No more walking back and forth to the stream with a large urn (conca) on her head to fetch water and wash the family's handmade and tattered clothes. In this new land the dinner plates of Lucia, her husband, and their six children were not hard to fill. Lucia was grateful.

More recent immigrants brought news from Italy that the Scorraneese were getting by despite



*A clipping from a Dupont Company internal newsletter shows Lucia and Giovanni Ulissi and their three sons serving in the Navy. A fourth son, Mark, would later also join the Navy.*

(Courtesy of Stephen Mark Ulissi)

the worldwide economic depression. Money was tight in both countries but those left behind rarely had cash to spend anyhow and her husband told her the new Italian dictator would bring order to Italy and move things forward. Every evening Giovanni stayed up to date on the current events listening to news programs on the radio (bought on credit despite Lucia's misgivings). Lucia feigned attention to Giovanni's comments but in reality had little interest in these political matters focusing instead on providing for her growing family.

Giovanni liked his job and took much pleasure that a dozen or so *vallaroli* (previous residents of Valle San Giovanni) were working under his tutelage. No English was required, and Giovanni went out of his way to ensure their success. The pace of work accelerated greatly in the late 1930's. Production increases meant more jobs

for the many Italian immigrants who approached him for ‘raccomandazioni’ (recommendations) most helpful in landing a job at DuPont. But Giovanni thought strange the company’s new policy that every bit of scrap metal be painstakingly inventoried and placed in sealed containers that he had never before seen. He was shaken when he was visited by his boss’s boss accompanied by an unknown man in a suit — strange garb to be wearing in the salvage yard. He was told to pass on to his workers the need to keep private what they saw and heard while working at the large chemical company. This did not surprise him. What did shock him was the man in the suit’s request to pass on information Giovanni might have about any anarchist or antiwar leanings of the other Italians in the salvage yard or his community. ‘Tropp’ ubazz’ (Too crazy) he thought. Giovanni blamed the new German leader but instinctively realized the increasingly powerful fascisti in Germany and his native Italy were about to convey untold problems to his family and the new country he had grown to love so dearly.

### *How could she be an ‘enemy alien’ after living in New Jersey for 30 years and proudly waving the American flag every 4th of July?*

Lucia’s worst nightmares became reality when Italy entered the Pact of Steel and officially allied itself with a country whose ambitions and policies directly opposed those of her adopted homeland. America’s declaration of war against Italy broke Lucia’s heart. Giovanni had become an American citizen in the 1920’s and, although unlikely to be drafted at his age, he now had to register for military service for the second point in his life — this time in America. Rumors of impending disaster spread quickly as everyone in Lucia’s neighborhood searched for some small piece of information that might ease their minds. No one thought it strange that not one Italian in the neighborhood had returned to Italy to support the fascists and fight for their homeland. Even if they had not gotten around to becoming citizens, they were now ‘medigan’ (Americans) and almost without exception, put



*Signs like this were stark reminders of the difficulties faced by some Italian-born residents.*

100% of their efforts into crushing the enemies of America. Lucia, too, supported America but saw things differently. She wanted to crush no one and tried not to think about folly that the men on her street would soon be sent to Italy in mortal combat against their countrymen and family members.

Things soon went from bad to worse. In June, 1940, the U.S. Congress passed the Alien Registration Act, also known as the Smith Act, requiring all aliens to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Lucia complied.

With the outbreak of war, on January 14, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation requiring aliens from the World War II enemy countries of Italy, Germany and Japan to register with the Department of Justice. Lucia ignored this directive. “Damn your ancestors!” was all Giovanni could say. Was she really an ‘enemy alien?’ How could this be after living in New Jersey for 30 years and proudly waving an American flag in both hands every 4th of July. In her mind she was no one’s enemy. She wanted only for the men to stop fighting and let her mind to her own family.

It was not meant to be. Lucia was now allowed to travel freely only in the communities where she lived or worked. Enemy aliens could travel to/from work, religious services, and government agencies but had to carry newly-issued ID cards at all times. All other travel required completing a document stating the traveler’s name, address, travel companions, intended destinations, trip purpose, mode of transportation and

date of return. They were restricted from entering areas surrounding forts, arsenals, airports, electric or power plants, docks, railroad terminals, depots, and other storage facilities. Several large areas in the western United States were totally off limits. Aliens were unable to change residences or jobs without permission of the local U.S. Attorney. All of the information gathered was forwarded to the FBI for processing. Under these regulations, Lucia was prohibited from owning a radio transmitter, short-wave radio sets, cameras, and firearms. Word on the street grew that Italians would be gathered up and sent to detention camps far from their homes and family. ‘Damn!’ was all Lucia could think about the matter.

Just as these policies came to pass, Lucia’s four sons all voluntarily joined the United States Navy. She asked each of them to promise to do what they could to avoid going to Italy to fight against their first cousins and Abruzzi comrades. They complied but understood that military orders must be obeyed.

On November 12, 1942, the U.S. Attorney General announced that the restrictions on enemy aliens would no longer pertain to persons of Italian ancestry. Nevertheless, Giovanni continued his tireless efforts to make Lucia a U.S. citizen. These applications were reviewed carefully but with Giovanni working in a war-related industry and with four enlisted sons, the couple was hopeful that this request would be approved. Late in the year of 1943, Lucia became a citizen of the United States and she was no longer ‘enemy alien,’ a term she despised and longed never to utter again. Just before her naturalization Abruzzi had been “liberated” and was now aligned with the American forces. Her four sons were safe and ‘Dio volente’ (God willing) would soon return home to work at DuPont with their father. Only later did she learn that she lost her Italian citizenship on the day of her naturalization. ‘Non menefrec’ (I don’t give a damn) she said to no one in particular.

From the late 1930’s onward, the United States propaganda machine did its part in recognizing the efforts of the Italians in America to support the war. At least three such articles highlighted the life and sacrifices of Lucia Scorrane — an Italian emigrant who kept Valle San Giovanni deep in her heart while bravely leaving Italy to live and die in Penns Grove, N.J. ■

# Dreaming of Italy: Trains and Planes

By Elizabeth DiGregorio

Travelling through Abruzzo and Molise can be tricky for those of us who are too timid or downright scared of renting a car and chugging through the Apennine Mountains. Italian creativity and ingenuity now makes it possible to see not only Abruzzo and Molise by train but the whole of Italy and its many historical and architectural treasures.

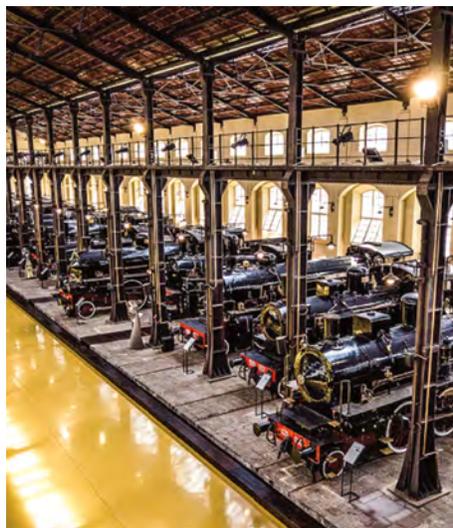
## The Historic Trains of Fondazione FS Italiane

The Fondazione FS Italiane looks after and manages the Italian State Railway's vast historic heritage for all of Italy. It was founded in 2013 and oversees a fleet of 400 pieces of historic "rolling stock", archives, library, The National Railway Museum at Pietrarsa (on the Naples-Salerno line) and in the future, the Railway Museum at Trieste Campo Marzio. It operates from Rome's historic Villa Patrizi, known to Romans as "The Railway Building." The organization also oversees *The Binari senza Tempo Project* which has reopened 10 tourist routes focusing on ecological and heritage sites along what were once abandoned lines. One of the first *Binari senza Tempo* projects begun in 2014 was the Sulmona-Carpinone line.

A visit to the website and a click on the "book a journey" icon will have you dreaming of Italy. Places previously reachable only by car, can now be visited by train. Reserve a seat on one of the many *Ferrovia dei Parchi* trains and find yourself traveling from Sulmona to Roccaraso, Castel di Sangro or Montesilvano in Abruzzo or to Carovilli in Molise.

There are many trains that travel through seven of Italy's 20 regions. Some are historic with steam locomotives; others are diesel or electric. The names of the trains evoke mystery and adventure: Some examples: *Treno degli Dei* transports you to Tropea, Bagnara, Scilla and Reggio Calabria; *Treno Dante* goes from Florence to Ravenna; *Treno Natura: festa dell'uva e del vino* from Siena to Chiusi; or *Treno Natura: dagli Etruschi al Brunello* from Siena to Montalcino.

And, if renting a train, complete with train engineers and staff, appeals to you, the FS Fondazione makes it possible. Perfect for celebrating a wedding, a special birthday or other memorable events.



The museum of the Fondazione FS Italiane.

Credit: fondazionefs.it

## The Transiberiana d'Italia

In April of 2021, Italy's Cultural Minister announced a 435-million-euro investment in the country's historic railway lines, notable pilgrimage routes, and other cultural itineraries.



The Transiberiana d'Italia travels through majestic scenery.

Credit: quotidianomolise.com

Two of note are the *Ferrovia dei Templi* that runs between Agrigento and Port Empedocle in Sicily. The other is the *Transiberiana d'Italia*, or the *Railway of the Parks*. It is called *Transiberiana d'Italia* because it crosses the Apennines and at one of its stops reaches an altitude of 1268.82 meters with the snowy, icy landscape reminiscent of Siberia. It travels through the forests of the *Majella National Park* and the mountainous areas of the Abruzzo and Molise regions. The trains are equipped with bicycle storage compartments and many train itineraries include tour, trekking and culinary guides.

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*Places previously reachable only by car can now be visited by train.*

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## La Dolce Vita — Orient Express Style

If none of the above captures your imagination, start saving for 2023 when Trenitalia will launch its *La Dolce Vita* train service that evokes Orient

Express-style retro extravagance and 10 different itineraries around Italy. The routes pass through 14 of Italy's 20 regions with access to 128 cities. Italian designer-chic vintage interiors and food inspired by the local produce are two of the many amenities.

On July 11, 2021, as part of a promotional trip, The "Dolce Vita" train left Rome for Sulmona and Roccaraso along the *Ferrovia dei Parchi*. The photo shows Itinerary 4, one of *La Dolce Vita's* 10 itineraries. It starts in Rome, connects with the *Transiberiana d'Italia* and takes you through Abruzzo and Molise's National Parks and Nature Reserves.



The route of La Dolce Vita train service.

Credit: viaggiando-italia.it

To learn more about the Fondazione FS Italiane, including how to book a journey, subscribe to its newsletter or take a virtual tour of the museums, click on these links (English or Italian).

[www.fondazionefs.it/content/fondazionefs/en.html](http://www.fondazionefs.it/content/fondazionefs/en.html)

[www.fondazionefs.it/content/fondazionefs/it.html](http://www.fondazionefs.it/content/fondazionefs/it.html)

If you are on Facebook, search Fondazione FS Italiane and follow it for all the latest announcements.

## ITA Airways — It's Official

ITA Airways ... Italia Trasporto Aereo launched October 15, 2021 with everything about the new airline being “centopercento italiano”. The new, evocative planes are sky-blue with the green, red and white tricolore stripes on the tail and engines, a homage to the Azzurri national sports team; staff will wear uniforms by top Italian designers, the plane interiors and airport lounges will be dressed by high-class Italian firms. Even the cars and minibuses used to move around the grounds will be Italian. The transformation from Alitalia to ITA Airways

should be finalized in early 2022 when the first new jets enter the fleet .... Rome to New York flights start as early as November 2021 ... but don't expect the new blue heaven until 2022. As the CNN article states: “they've long dominated the food and fashion worlds, this year they've dominated sports, and now they're aiming for the skies.”

### Sources:

Dolce Vita train. Here are all the itineraries of the Orient Express in Italy: dream journeys in the Italian heart ([viaggiando-italia.it](http://viaggiando-italia.it))

Just The Ticket! Italy Invests In Luxury And Vintage Train Travel ([forbes.com](http://forbes.com))

La Transiberiana d'Italia alla scoperta del Molise, nuove tappe tra borghi, natura e cultura — [quotidianomolise.com](http://quotidianomolise.com)

ITA Airways: All about the new Italian airline | [CNN Travel](http://CNN Travel) ■



ITA Airways' sky blue plane.

Credit: cnn.com

# The AMHS Shop

Please make sure to check out the cool merchandise AMHS has to offer:

**“Traditional Cuisine of Abruzzo and Molise” cookbook** (2nd printing) **\$5.00**

**Buon Appetito Chef's Apron** **\$20.00**

**T-Shirts** **\$20.00**

- Men's sizes: S / M / L / XL; Crew neck; 50% cotton/ 50% polyester
- Women's sizes: S / M / L / XL; V-neck; 90% cotton/10% polyester

**AMHS Tote Bag** **\$30.00**

17" W x 6" D x 13½" H; bottom 12" W; handle drop 9"; 100% durable cotton fabric



This year, we are pleased to offer our newest merchandise item, the AMHS baseball cap

**AMHS Baseball Caps** **\$15.00**

We offer merchandise for sale at bi-monthly AMHS general society meetings and for order, by check on the AMHS Shop.

The proceeds from merchandise sales go toward the AMHS Annual Scholarship Fund. We thank you for your patronage! If you have any questions regarding AMHS merchandise, please contact Michele LaVerghetta, (410) 707-4611.



# CAPISTRELLO

PROVINCE OF L'AQUILA, REGION OF ABRUZZO

By Nancy DeSanti

The town of Capistrello, in the province of L'Aquila, is located at the border between the upper Liri River valley and the Marsica. It has approximately 5,600 inhabitants, known as Capestrallani. Situated in a domineering position overlooking the Liri Valley, in the past it linked the Fucino Plain with Sora and Napoli.

The name appears for the first time in the 12th century as *Caput Pristinorum*. The feudal lands belonged to Oddo de Toucy and Giacomo Orsini, then in the 16th century, to the Colonna family. Under Napoleon's brother-in-law Joachim Murat in the early 1800s, it became an autonomous municipality. But then in 1915, there was an earthquake that caused great damage to the town.

A pivotal event in the town was the Capistrello massacre (*eccidio di Capistrello*) which was a mass killing carried out on June 4, 1944 by Nazi and Fascist soldiers during World War II. A first tragic episode occurred a few months earlier when a local youth was barbarically tortured and then shot. The following roundup by Nazis and Fascists on the slopes of Mount Salviano led to the capture and torture of 33 shepherds. The shooting occurred near the Capistrello railway station.

The massacre occurred a few days after the breakthrough of the Gustav Line by the Allied forces which obliged Germans to retreat further north. They carried out a series of arrests and shootings of partisans as well as reprisals against the population of the towns that they were occupying or passing through.

On May 25, 2004, the President of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, decorated the town of Capistrello with the Golden Medal for Civil Merit (*Medaglia d'Oro al Merito Civile*). ■



A panoramic view of Capistrello.

Credit: borghiaautenticiditalia.it

*A pivotal event in Capistrello's history was the massacre of civilians by Nazi and Fascist soldiers in 1944.*

## What to See

- The Cunicoli di Claudio, tunnels excavated under Roman Emperor Claudius, when the draining of Lake Fucino was first attempted.
- The remains of the castle at Ricetto.
- The little church of St. Barbara.

## Sources:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capistrello](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capistrello)

[www.borghiaautenticiditalia.it/borgo/capistrello](http://www.borghiaautenticiditalia.it/borgo/capistrello)

[www.italyheritage.com/regions/abruzzo/laquila/capistrello.htm](http://www.italyheritage.com/regions/abruzzo/laquila/capistrello.htm)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capistrello\\_massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capistrello_massacre)

## Important Dates

- **June 13** — Feast of St. Anthony of Padua, the patron saint
- **July 10-23** — Arzibanda, a popular ethnic-folk festival
- **First Sunday in August** — Strawberry and Mountain Festival
- **August 14** — Festival of the "marrocca" (corn cob) at Corcumello
- During the summer a major exhibition of handicraft is also held.

# CAPISTRELLO

PROVINCIA DI L'AQUILA, REGIONE ABRUZZO

Translated by Ennio DiTullio

Il comune di Capistrello, in provincia dell'Aquila, si trova al confine tra l'alta valle del fiume Liri e la Marsica. Conta circa 5.600 abitanti, conosciuti come Capestrallani. Posta in posizione dominante sulla Valle del Liri, in passato collegava la Piana del Fucino con Sora e Napoli.

Il nome compare per la prima volta nel XII secolo come Caput Pristinorum. I feudi appartenevano a Oddo de Toucy e Giacomo Orsini, poi nel XVI secolo alla famiglia Colonna. Sotto il cognato di Napoleone Gioacchino Murat nei primi anni del 1800 divenne comune autonomo. Ma poi, nel 1915, ci fu un terremoto che causò gravi danni alla città.

Un evento cruciale nella città fu l'eccidio di Capistrello che fu un massacro compiuto il 4 giugno 1944 da soldati nazisti e fascisti durante la seconda guerra mondiale. Un primo tragico episodio si verificò pochi mesi prima quando un giovane del posto fu barbaramente torturato e poi fucilato. Il successivo rastrellamento di nazisti e fascisti sulle pendici del monte Salviano portò alla cattura e alla tortura di 33 pastori. L'eccidio avvenne nei pressi della stazione ferroviaria di Capistrello.

Il massacro avvenne pochi giorni dopo lo sfondamento della Linea Gustav da parte delle forze alleate che costrinse i tedeschi a ritirarsi più a nord. I tedeschi eseguirono una serie di arresti e fucilazioni di partigiani nonché rappresaglie contro la popolazione dei paesi che occupavano o attraversavano.

Il 25 maggio 2004 il Presidente della Repubblica Italiana Carlo Azeglio Ciampi ha insignito la città di Capistrello della Medaglia d'Oro al Merito Civile. ■



The monument to the World War II martyrs in Capistrello.

Credit: Wikipedia

## Attrazioni del luogo:

- Cunicoli di Claudio, gallerie scavate sotto l'imperatore romano Claudio, quando fu tentato per la prima volta il prosciugamento del Lago Fucino
- I resti del castello del Ricetto.
- La chiesetta di S. Barbara.

## Date da ricordare:

- **13 giugno** — Festa di Sant'Antonio da Padova, patrono
- **10-23 luglio** — Arzibanda, popolare festa etnico-folkloristica
- **Prima domenica di agosto** — Festa della fragola e della montagna
- **14 agosto** — Sagra della "marrocca" a Corcumello
- Durante l'estate si tiene anche una grande mostra di artigianato.

# THIS IS YOUR NOTIZIARIO

By Carmine James Spellane, Editor

*The Notiziario belongs to all of us, and we want to hear from you.*

The AMHS is much more than just its meetings. We are a vibrant society of people who care about their heritage and want to learn more. And all of us have stories to tell. We encourage you to submit articles for the newsletter to tell yours. It could be about a recent trip to Italy, honors received by you or your family, milestones such as significant birthdays or anniversaries, reviews of books on Italian topics, or recipes, to name but a few ideas.

All articles can be emailed to [abruzzo-moliseheritagesociety@gmail.com](mailto:abruzzo-moliseheritagesociety@gmail.com) to my attention. As editor, I will carefully review each submission and edit as needed. Please understand that publication of any article is subject to space available and the appropriate nature of the content, but we will make every effort to use your work and photos.

The AMHS is making new efforts to engage our current members and add more to our ranks. A vibrant Notiziario is part of that. As our society approaches its 22nd anniversary, let's all help ensure a bright future for our mission to celebrate "all things Italian." ■





# GUARDIAREGIA

PROVINCE OF CAMPOBASSO, REGION OF MOLISE

By Nancy DeSanti

The small mountain town of Guardiaregia is located in the province of Campobasso. The town has approximately 783 inhabitants known as Guardioli. Their patron saint is San Nicola di Bari, also known as St. Nicholas.

Rising on a crest over the Quirino river at the foot of Monte Capraro, facing the forests of Colle Antona, the town takes its name from a garrison assigned in 1865 as a defense of nearby Campochiaro. In ancient times, it was a stronghold of the Samnites, and was conquered by the Romans during the Samnite wars in the 2nd century B.C.

The current settlement dates from the medieval Lombard Duchy of Benevento, when a castle was built there to protect Campochiaro. In 1805, the town was hit with a devastating earthquake that literally swallowed the castle in a chasm that opened up as the ridge split from the mountain to which it was once attached.

That event was the principal cause of emigration from the town, and today, Piazza Toronto commemorates those who sent aid and support to the people who rebuilt the town. There was a lot of immigration to Canada and the United States after World War II. In Toronto, there is a large community of Guardioli, and a Guardiaregia picnic is held annually.



*Above: A panoramic view of Guardiaregia with the mountain looming dramatically in the background.*

Credit: Wikipedia

For nature lovers, adventurers and those who just enjoy pure mountain air, the WWF Guardiaregia-Campochiaro Oasis is a fabulous destination. With walking trails that vary in difficulty and pristine landscapes, the reserve is stunning in every season. The colorful blooms in spring, the excursions in summer, the warm colors of autumn and the snow-covered beech forest in winter are all uniquely inviting. The oasis features an abundance of streams and forests, and a wealth of wild vegetation like strawberries, mushrooms and medicinal herbs.



*The entrance to the wildlife area of the oasis.*

Credit: WWF Oasis - Guardiaregia

beech woods and canyons, including the spectacular Cusano gully. There are also springs and waterways, such as the Vivo river and the San Nicola waterfalls. Along the way, there are beautiful grottos which are still partly unexplored. The variations in altitude allow for typical Mediterranean scrub flora as well as Apennine vegetation characterized by beech woods.



*The visitors' center at the oasis.*

Credit: WWF Oasis - Guardiaregia

Nearby Monte Mutria is so high (1,823 meters) that the ascent takes over 3 hours. But the effort is worth it, since it provides a great view of the whole province of Campobasso. Along the steep cliffs, there are

In the spring, you can find flowering crocus, beautiful gentians, lilies of San Giovanni, anemone of the Apennines, and forget-me-nots. In addition to the luxuriant flora, typical mountain fauna can be seen. Monte Mutria is home to wolves, wild boar, badgers, mountain lions, the Marsican bear, deer and several birds of prey such as the Falco Pellegrino. Given the abundance of water sources in the oasis, there are many amphibians as well, including the spectacled salamander, considered to be a symbol of the oasis. ■

# GUARDIAREGIA

PROVINCIA DI CAMPOBASSO, REGIONE MOLISE

*With pristine landscapes, Guardiaregia is stunning in every season.*

## What to See

- The church of San Nicola from the 18th century
- Monte Mutria
- Grotta Rumita, of great interest for speleologists
- Campitello di Guardiaregia, the site of a WWF Natural Oasis established there for the preservation of the natural flora comprising century-old trees (beech trees over 500 years old in an area called Tre Frati) and a great variety of flowers, including over 20 species of orchids. Wildlife includes the wolf, boar, a great many rare amphibians, birds and rare butterflies.

## Important Dates

- **May 9** — Feast of St. Nicholas of Bari, the patron saint

## Sources:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guardiaregia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guardiaregia)  
[www.italyheritage.com/regions/molise/province-campobasso/guardiaregia.htm](http://www.italyheritage.com/regions/molise/province-campobasso/guardiaregia.htm)  
[magazine.dooid.it/en/interests-en/spa-and-wellnesswwf-guardiaregia-campochiaro-oasis](http://magazine.dooid.it/en/interests-en/spa-and-wellnesswwf-guardiaregia-campochiaro-oasis) (link expired)

## Translated by Ennio DiTullio

Il piccolo comune montano di Guardiaregia si trova in provincia di Campobasso. Il comune conta circa 783 abitanti conosciuti come Guardioli. Il loro patrono è San Nicola di Bari, detto anche San Nicola.

Sorge su un crinale sul fiume Quirino ai piedi del Monte Capraro, di fronte ai boschi di Colle Antona, il paese prende il nome da un presidio assegnato nel 1865 a difesa della vicina Campochiaro. Anticamente fu una roccaforte dei Sanniti, e fu conquistata dai Romani durante le guerre sannitiche nel II secolo a.C.

L'attuale insediamento risale al medievale Ducato longobardo di Benevento, quando vi fu costruito un castello a protezione di Campochiaro. Nel 1805 il paese fu colpito da un devastante terremoto che inghiottì letteralmente il castello in una voragine che si aprì mano che il crinale si staccava dal monte a cui un tempo era attaccato.

Quell'evento fu la principale causa dell'emigrazione dalla città, e oggi Piazza Toronto ricorda coloro che hanno inviato aiuti e sostegno alle persone che hanno ricostruito la città. C'è stata molta emigrazione in Canada e negli Stati Uniti dopo la seconda guerra mondiale. A Toronto c'è una grande comunità di Guardioli e ogni anno si tiene un picnic di Guardiaregia.

Per gli amanti della natura, degli avventurieri e per chi ama semplicemente l'aria pura di montagna, l'Oasi WWF Guardiaregia-Campochiaro è una destinazione favolosa. Con percorsi pedonali che variano in difficoltà e paesaggi incontaminati, la riserva è meravigliosa in ogni stagione. Le fioriture colorate in primavera, le escursioni in estate, i colori caldi dell'autunno e la faggeta innevata in inverno sono tutti un invito unico. L'oasi è caratterizzata da un'abbondanza di ruscelli e boschi e da una ricchezza di vegetazione selvatica come fragole, funghi ed erbe medicinali.

Il vicino Monte Mutria è così alto (1.823 metri) che la salita dura più di 3 ore. Ma ne vale la pena, dal momento che offre una splendida

vista su tutta la provincia di Campobasso. Lungo le ripide falesie si aprono faggete e canyon, tra cui lo spettacolare canalone del Cusano. Sono presenti anche sorgenti e corsi d'acqua, come il fiume Vivo e le cascate di San Nicola. Lungo il percorso si trovano bellissime grotte ancora in parte inesplorate. Le variazioni di altitudine consentono una flora tipica della macchia mediterranea e una vegetazione appenninica caratterizzata da faggete.

In primavera si possono trovare crochi in fiore, bellissime genziane, gigli di San Giovanni, anemoni dell'Appennino e non-ti-scordar-dime. Oltre alla rigogliosa flora si può osservare la tipica fauna di montagna. Il Monte Mutria ospita lupi, cinghiali, tassi, leoni di montagna, l'orso marsicano, cervi e diversi rapaci come il Falco Pellegrino. Data l'abbondanza di fonti d'acqua nell'oasi, anche gli anfibi sono numerosi. La salamandra dagli occhiali, infatti, è considerata il simbolo dell'oasi. ■

## Attrazioni del luogo:

- La chiesa di San Nicola del XVIII secolo
- Monte Mutria
- Grotta Rumita, di grande interesse per gli speleologi
- Campitello di Guardiaregia, sede di un'Oasi Naturale del WWF ivi istituita per la conservazione della flora naturale composta da alberi secolari (faggi di oltre 500 anni nella zona denominata Tre Frati) e una grande varietà di fiori, tra cui oltre 20 specie di orchidee. La fauna include il lupo, il cinghiale, moltissimi anfibi rari, uccelli e farfalle rare.

## Date da ricordare:

- **9 maggio** — Festa di San Nicola di Bari, patrono



# SIAMO UNA FAMIGLIA

## From The AMHS Nominating Committee — An Update

The Nominating Committee reported in the September-November *Notiziario* that the Society would hold elections for the positions of President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary, and three members of the Board at a general membership meeting on November 28. As we are now looking to hold an in-person meeting on December 5, we are conducting this year's election by mailed ballot, as was done last year for the election of three board members. The ballot will ask you to select from a slate of candidates as well as offer you the opportunity to submit a write-in candidate(s). Note that a ballot sent to a couple shall be counted as two (2) votes. Ballots may be returned in the **stamped & addressed envelope enclosed with the ballot no later than November 30, 2021**. We strongly encourage you to vote!

The current members of the Executive Committee, namely Ray LaVerghetta (President), Nancy DeSanti (1st Vice President, Programs), Lynn Sorbara (2nd Vice President, Membership), Carmine James Spellane (Secretary), and Peter Bell (Treasurer) have agreed to serve one more 2-year term in their respective positions. There are two candidates for the AMHS Board of Directors: Americo (Rico) Allegrino and Julia Paola. AMHS is in search of a 3rd candidate to serve on the Board. If you are interested and can volunteer your time, please contact Maria D'Andrea-Yothers, [uva051985@comcast.net](mailto:uva051985@comcast.net) to learn more about the Board's function, and Board members' responsibilities as outlined in the AMHS By-Laws.

The elected officers and board members shall assume office on January 1, 2022. Their terms of office are two years and three years, respectively. (Submitted by the AMHS Nominating Committee: Rico Allegrino, Maria D'Andrea-Yothers, and Lynn Sorbara). ■

## AMHS Membership

By Lynn Sorbara, 2nd Vice President, Membership

### NEW MEMBERS

*We welcome new members:*  
is extended to: **Richard Durkin, Davide Gadren, and Pamela Pasquariello.**

### ANNIVERSARIES

#### Anniversari a Novembre

Harry & Joan Piccariello, November 9.

#### Anniversari a Dicembre

Ray & Michele LaVerghetta, December 11;  
and David & Cristina Scalzitti, December 27.

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Category	# of Persons
Associate (Couple)	5 x 2 = 10
Associate (Individual)	41
General (Couple)	45 x 2 = 90
General (Individual)	93
Honorary	11
Scholarship	2
Student	6
<b>Total Membership:</b>	<b>253</b>



### BIRTHDAYS

#### Compleanni a Novembre

Eileen Verna and Naomi Leibold, November 1; **Rev. John V. DiBacco, Jr.**, November 2; **Richard Durkin and Anthony D'Ambrosi**, November 3; **Rita Carrier and Michael DeBonis**, November 4; **Elena Biondi**, November 5; **Anita DiPietro, Luciana Caleb and Sergio Fresco**, November 8; **Rocco Caniglia and Joseph Ruzzi, Jr.**, November 9; **Michael McDonald**, November 10; **Emilia DeMeo**, November 12; **Edvige D'Andrea, Joseph D'Andrea, Dena DeBonis and Sabrina de Sousa**, November 19; **Betsy Ruzzi and Ross Cameron**, November 21; **Gerard Di Flavis**, November 24; **Christina Iovino**, November 25; and **Amelia DiFiore**, November 30.

#### Compleanni a Dicembre

**Rosalie Ciccotelli**, December 2; **Domenica Marchetti**, December 3; **Alfred DelGrosso**, December 4; **Marlene Lucian and Louie Anne D'Ottavio**, December 6; **Yoni Kay Caniglia**, December 7; **Frank Bonsiero and Domenico Cipicchio**, December 8; **Stephen di Girolamo**, December 9; **William Lepore and Barbara Gentile**, December 12; **Maria D'Andrea-Yothers**, December 13; **Cathy Branciaroli**, December 16; **Domenico Conti**, December 18; **Elodia D'Onofrio and Carmine James Spellane**, December 20; **Anna Isgro**, December 21; **Claire DeMarco**, December 22; **Brian Pasquino**, December 25; **Michael Savino**, December 26; **Margot DeRuvo Gilberg and Father Charles Zanoni**, December 29.

Give the Gift of **MEMBERSHIP!**

For details visit **Become a Member** on [www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org](http://www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org).

# CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI

## *is Topic of First In-person AMHS Event in Nearly Two Years*

▼ *Continued from page 1*

And for the first time, we had an AMHS event co-hosted by the Casa Italiana Sociocultural Center (CISC), represented by Francesco Isgrò, and the Robert A. Facchina Italian American Museum of Washington, D.C. (IAMDC), represented by Liz DiGregorio and Anna Isgrò.

Steve Livengood is the Director of Public Programs at the United States Capitol Historical Society, a private not-for-profit organization chartered by the United States Congress. He is also Chief Visitor Guide to the U.S. Capitol Historical Society (USCHS) who gives the VIP tours. So you could say we got a partial virtual tour by the guide who normally gives tours to VIPs and big donors.



*Steven Livengood*

Steve has worked in various capacities in the political and policy circles in Washington, culminating with his work for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society since 1994. He has won numerous awards and been cited for his work in promoting the interpretation of the Capitol building by professional city guides. The Embassy of Italy nominated him Cavaliere d'Italia for his efforts in promoting the life and legacy of Constantino Brumidi.

It was said that the U.S. Capitol was Brumidi's canvas. He mixed classical Italian styles with American symbols for paintings on some of the ceilings. For what are known as the Brumidi Corridors on the first floor of the Senate wing, he was inspired by motifs that Raphael employed in the Vatican.

We got a glimpse of some of these magnificent parts of the Capitol from Steve's excellent PowerPoint presentation, which he revised during the lockdown and debuted at our meeting. The beauty and splendor of Brumidi's creations are astounding.

Brumidi was born in Rome of a Greek father and Italian mother. He came to the United States in 1852 and became a citizen in 1857. You could say his life and work exemplified the lives of millions of immigrants who came to this country to pursue the American dream.

He used the technique of painting on freshly laid lime plaster which is closely associated

with Renaissance painting. "The Apotheosis of George Washington" was Brumidi's most ambitious work and it was meant to depict American exceptionalism after the Civil War. It depicts George Washington rising to the heavens in glory. The work was completed in 1865 after only 11 months. It is suspended 180 feet above the Rotunda floor. The figures are up to 15 feet tall and were inspired by classical and Renaissance images, especially those of Raphael. In art, the term Apotheosis (from the Greek word for God, "theos") refers to the treatment of any subject in a grand or exalted manner (such as the Roman emperors).

Besides this iconic masterpiece, Brumidi also created the first tribute to an African American in the Capitol with the figure of Crispus Attucks, who is the focal point of his fresco of the Boston Massacre.

Steve recalled that Joe Grano, whom many in the audience remember fondly, was instrumental in getting the Congressional Gold Medal awarded posthumously to Brumidi in July 2012. The Gold Medal was in recognition of Brumidi's contributions as a designer of

murals in the U.S. Capitol, including those in the Senate Reception Room, the President's Room, the Senate Appropriations Committee Rooms and the Brumidi Corridors.

The USCHS has hosted Steve's wonderful webinars during the pandemic, such as U.S. Capitol Ghost Stories (he says this is one of his most popular), Creating Capitol Hill, and Frederick Law Olmsted and U.S. Capitol Grounds.

Before Steve's talk, Lynn Sorbara, drawing on her background at NIH overseeing laboratories during Covid research, gave a brief explanation of the steps we were taking to make the event a safe one for everybody (limit of 50 attendees and showing of vaccination cards). Then after grace was said by Father dall'Agnese, we enjoyed a delicious lunch catered by Fontina Grille, followed by desserts made by Lynn and Elise DiClemente.

Many thanks to all who helped set up and serve the lunch, including Elisa DiClemente, Michele LaVerghetta, Sarah Scott and Lynn Sorbara. And thanks also to Lena Lupica, Frank Bonsiero and Chris Renneker for helping to make the event such a success.

*(Note: A copy of "The Apotheosis of George Washington" and a copy of the Brumidi Congressional Gold Medal are on display in the new Italian American Museum of Washington, D.C.)* ■



*AMHS President Ray LaVerghetta (2nd from left) and his wife Michele welcomed USCHS Education Specialist Tom Marabello and Roberto Severino (right).*

# Italy's Prime Minister Vows Speedier L'Aquila Reconstruction

By Nancy DeSanti

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi traveled to L'Aquila on September 28, 2021, to inaugurate a park in memory of the 309 victims of the earthquake that devastated the Abruzzo capital in 2009. More importantly, he also promised major funding to help reconstruct L'Aquila.

"My presence serves first of all to reaffirm the duty of remembrance. The 2009 earthquake belongs to the collective memory and to the world," the Prime Minister said at the inauguration of the *Parco della Memoria de L'Aquila*. "We cannot forget, we must not forget," he said, calling the victims "309 angels."

Earlier this year, Italy marked the 12th anniversary of the 6.3-magnitude earthquake that struck L'Aquila in the early hours of April 6, 2009, killing 309 people, leaving 70,000 homeless and devastating more than 50 villages in the central Abruzzo region. "We must accelerate [funding], for the moral obligation we have towards all of



*Prime Minister Draghi speaks at L'Aquila.*

Credit: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it)

you citizens. And we must do it to help the economic recovery of these areas. The 2009 earthquake caused an estimated loss of over 200 million euros per year. About 11% of the total added value of the area, to which the damage of the pandemic has been added," Draghi said.

The Prime Minister noted that in the city of L'Aquila, the renovation of private buildings has now exceeded 80 percent, thanks also to the introduction of innovative techniques. The delays mainly affect the public reconstruction process.

"I'm talking about schools, hospitals, streets, offices and churches, those buildings that make a place a community," Draghi said. He stated that 1.78 billion euros in funding, drawn from Italy's national recovery and resilience plan (PNRR), would be allocated to the central Italian areas hit by earthquakes in 2009, 2016 and 2017, with the funding to be used for "safe and sustainable reconstruction, environmental recovery, and initiatives to support citizens and businesses." ■

**Save  
the  
Date**

**DECEMBER 5, 2021**  
*General Meeting  
& Wine Tasting*  
*Details to be announced*



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