

# The Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey

## ALBERT MAROTTA

The Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey met on August 1, 2015 at the Elmwood Park Municipal Building. Eighteen people attended.

Maria Carparelli opened the meeting by sharing correspondence. The Passaic County Historical Society together with Passaic County Community College sponsored a guided bus tour of famed Paterson sculptor, Gaetano Federici's life and works, with stops at the Lambert Castle and the Hamilton Club in September. Also she received notice that Salvatore J. Turchio gave a presentation at the Italian American Museum in August, "Cent'Anni: 100 Years of Francis Albert Sinatra, An American Icon."

Michelle Novak, a member of the Boards of Trustees for the Genealogical Society of New Jersey and of Bergen County, offered to help publicize the work of our Society at The New York State Family History Conference in Syracuse, NY on September 17-19, 2015. This conference anticipates over 600 participants to attend. The Society would have to provide her with promotional material in time for the event. The Society agreed to have brochures printed for this purpose at a cost of \$100 from donations and \$20 from the organization's treasury. Maria offered to pay the postage.

Carolyn McNamara asked for the exact date of the Society's founding so that a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration could be planned. The Society was established September 1996 and it was thought that November 2016 might be a good date for this event.

Judy Bonzkowski presented the treasurer's report. The ending balance as of August 1, 2015 is \$327.00. The chapter has 33 members, however only 23 of these have kept their membership current with dues payment.

Maryanne Graham wondered if the Society should post its meetings on Facebook and Annita Zalenski suggested the Society might have a Facebook page with links. Yet, first a Facebook page has to be created by someone with the ability to do this.

Maria provided the Society with a selection of genealogy-related DVDs. The Society chose to view the two episode series, "Faces of America with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.", which first premiered in 2010 on PBS. Featured genealogists use the tools of genealogy and genetics (both paper trail and DNA) to explore family histories of twelve prominent Americans during the "Century of Immigration" from the 1820s to 1924. It seeks to uncover America's relationship with her new immigrants during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Among those selected was Elizabeth Alexander, poet, author, and professor at Yale University. Her paternal grandfather came from Kingston, Jamaica to New York City in 1918. Family tradition thought he arrived as a stowaway, but research discovered that he came as a first-class passenger. Her maternal line was able to be traced back 37 generations.

Mario Batali, a celebrity chef who has opened six restaurants in New York City, hailed from the West. His great-grandfather left Italy in 1899 to arrive at Butte, Montana to work in the coal and quartz mines. The family eventually settled in Seattle, Washington. Mario's father was an engineer who, upon retiring, opened a meat-curing shop. His maternal great-great grandparents opened up an Italian food store in 1903. Perhaps this was the inspiration and source for his talent in the kitchen.

Stephen Colbert, a comedian, had his Irish ancestors arrival to the U.S. traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century while his German ancestors came to this country during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Louise Erdrich, a prolific author, learned that her paternal line was German but her maternal line descended from Turtle Mountain Chippewas, Native Americans from North Dakota, and her maternal grandfather was a tribal chief.

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Malcolm Gladwell, an author and a journalist for *The Washington Post* and *The New Yorker* magazine, had a very varied ancestry. Ancestors were West Indian, English, Jewish, Irish and Scottish. His father was English and his mother Jamaican. Their interracial marriage was legal then in rural Ontario, where they first settled.

Eva Longoria, an actress, learned that her first ancestor arrived in the New World from Spain in 1603. His descendants moved to the U.S.-Mexican border and she grew up in South Texas.

YoYo Ma, a musician and cellist, was born in Paris, France but came with his family to New York at a young age. It was thought that the family genealogy had been lost during the political upheaval of the Cultural Revolution in China. However, YoYo Ma learned that his cousin had hidden it in the walls of his home to prevent its destruction. His paternal genealogy was traced back to 1217 and a common ancestor might be traced to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

Mike Nichols, a film, stage and television director and producer, was born in Germany to Jewish parents. As Nazis were arresting Jews in Berlin, he left in 1938 with his brother to join their father in America. His mother arrived later. His story reflected the plight of his people.

Queen Nor, Queen of Jordan, also had an interesting family history. Her great grandfather came to New York around 1891 as one of the earliest Syrian immigrants to the U.S.

Dr. Mehmet Oz, a TV host and heart surgeon who lives in New Jersey, is of Turkish heritage. His father earned a scholarship which brought him to the U.S. as a resident in a Cleveland hospital in 1955.

Meryl Streep, an actress who is a NJ native, is a fifth generation American. Her ancestry was traced for ten generations to Germany. Ancestors from her maternal side were among the first to settle Rhode Island and she has deep roots in Pennsylvania as well. One ancestor emigrated to America during the 1848 Revolution, perhaps illegally while another branch was traced to Switzerland and yet another came during the Franco-Prussian War.

Kristi Yamaguchi, Olympic skater, learned that her paternal grandfather immigrated to Hawaii in 1899 and made his way to the continental U.S. He lived through changing restrictions on immigrants from Japan. Her maternal grandfather even served in an all-white unit (which was highly unusual) during combat in World War II.

The history of the U.S., as viewed through the lens of world events, race, prejudice, poverty, ambition and hope, was wonderfully portrayed in this series as life was lived through generations of these featured families.

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Future meetings will be held on:

February 6, 2016  
May 7, 2016  
August 6, 2016  
November 5, 2016

For details, see our website: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~njigc/>