



La Notizia Italiana



The Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey



In This Issue:



Mario Cuomo
1932-2015

Italian Genealogy 101

GENEALOGY Roadshow

Tuesdays, 8PM
Channel 13

Calendar

IN MEMORIAM: GOV. MARIO M. CUOMO



Left to right: Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, Mrs. Matilda Raffa Cuomo, Uff. Maria T. Fosco and Uff. Joseph V. Scelsa, Ed.D.

Il Centro

January 4, 2015

"Mario Cuomo was one of us, proud of his Italian roots"
Maria Fosco, the daughter of immigrants from Orsogna, remembers the former Governor of New York who passed away on New Year's Day:

"I felt he was ours, as if he was a family member, a neighbor, a fellow countryman," says Professor Maria Fosco, the daughter of immigrants from Orsogna, one of the most famous women of culture in New York, who for 35 years has followed the former Governor Mario Cuomo. She remembers in 2004 when Gov. Cuomo participated at the Italian American Museum's Gala at the Plaza Hotel. It was her, in the role of "mistress of ceremony" and Vice President, who welcomed him along with her 10 year old niece, Emily Macchia (mother of Abruzzese descent, father of Pugliese descent). "The governor arrived with his wife, Matilda. When he saw little Emily, he knelt to kiss her hand. He said that he was brought to his knees to kiss the hand of a woman only once before and that was for his wife, Matilda, but on that night he would make an exception. It was the highlight of the evening and the photo being published in the newspapers. My niece joyfully remembers that meeting."

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(cont' from p. 1)

Maria Fosco remembers: "I was very young when I heard the name, Mario Cuomo, for the first time. I was 13 or 14 years old. It was pronounced in such a friendly manner as if he was a member of the family. There had been other public figures in New York with Italian names, but none of them were able to become part of us as well as he was able to. In his first electoral campaign, he visited all of the Italian-American communities. My father, who was very involved with the Orsogna Mutual Aid Society, told me of the time when Gov. Cuomo, along with Geraldine Ferraro, made a surprise appearance at the Orsogna Club's annual "Festa della Porchetta". He cheerfully sat down to eat with all the Orsognesi. Mario Cuomo did not win that election, but he did become Lieutenant Governor (Vice-Governor). Proudly, as Italians and Orsognesi, we were at the side of Cuomo with our Folkloric group, performing for free in the campaign launched by the US government, for the collection of funds for those affected by the terrible earthquake in Italy of November 1980." Maria Fosco remembers with great joy in 1982 when Mario Cuomo decided to run for governor and was elected. The entire Italian-American community was mobilized. My father was actively involved in the Cuomo campaign, exhibiting a ribbon on his lapel while dancing in an Orsognese costume at the Columbus Day Parade. The photo was published on the front page of the New York Times."

Professor Fosco, what changed with Cuomo's victory?

"It was a renaissance for all of us. The issues of discrimination of Italian Americans at the City University of New York were finally out in the open. Senator John D. Calandra ruled that discrimination was in fact in place. He proposed an institute to monitor the university, to help teachers, students and the entire community to enter the University. Shortly thereafter the John D. Calandra Institute was born, and in January 1986, I was hired to assist the community in all cultural activities.

How did Gov. Cuomo help you?

"Since we always had financial problems, the Governor decided to place the Institute in his Executive Budget. So our budget was \$250,000, but now it is \$2.5 million. He supported all of our initiatives. In 1990 we published a study on Italian-Americans who had not completed high school, emphasizing the high school dropout rate. I used this information to entice young Italian-Americans to attend school."

Was there a time when the Institute was in danger of being suppressed?

"Unfortunately yes. In September 1992, they wanted to close it. The director at the time was Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa,* a strong civil rights leader for Italian Americans. He decided to bring the University of the City of New York before the Federal Court on charges of violation of civil rights. We won. We made headlines. Italian Americans were considered an ethnic group by the laws of 1861 and 1964. The University appealed the decision. At that point, Governor Cuomo sent us his trusted advisers to see how to help. He negotiated an agreement between the University and the Calandra Institute, signed on January 7, 1994. We are so eternally grateful to Gov. Cuomo. It was really a moment of great pride when in Washington, at the annual meeting of the most important Italian-Americans, he gave a speech on the importance of our Institute. He explained how he helped to save it, against any kind of discrimination against Italian Americans."

"When the Italian American Museum was founded, he asked his wife Matilda to guide us. He was so proud of his Italian identity. Gov. Cuomo attended all of our events. I remember when we bought the building. I was alone, I was looking at the renovations that had to be made. Mrs. Cuomo entered without my noticing. She hugged me, gave me a kiss and told me: "You'll be fine, we will help you." One day I called the Cuomo household to talk with Matilda Cuomo. The former governor answered: "Hello Maria, how is it going with the museum?" And I said: "Well we're working." He assured me: "Do not worry, Matilda and I will help you." "And so it was."

"He believed in the study of language and history. He really cares about the values of the family and was always in touch with our community. I have attended many dinners and events with him. He was always there, so kind and affable. I will keep the memory of his words forever. Children of immigrants, we were able to cultivate America. We did not have to deny our origins and our names to be successful. He was the first to not hide the fact that his parents did not speak English and that his values were really Italian. He was proud of his Italian origin and made us be proud of our roots. He was a champion of Italian-Americans. He was one of us. He understands our struggles and paved the way for our success. "

Domenico Logozzo

* Dr. Scelsa is the founder and President of the Italian-American Museum in NYC

*Above interview with Uff. Maria Fosco courtesy of **Il Centro**, January 4, 2015*

GENEALOGY *Roadshow*

Italian Genealogy 101



Tracing your Italian ancestry is one of the greatest adventures you can ever undertake. You will find the road full of twists and turns and surprises. You will experience conflicting emotions—delight and disappointment; wonder and weariness; sentiment and sadness; exhilaration and embarrassment. But, as all roads lead to Rome, your Italian ancestry inevitably leads to you. It leads to the promise of who you are and what you can be. It is your own family history. It is about us.

Now, before you run off to beautiful Italy to research arcane Italian records, first do some homework. Verify your Italian ancestral town(s) and your ancestors' original names. Remember that the name "Giuseppe" often became "Joseph" and "Vincenzo" sometimes became "Vincent" or "James". This information may be preserved in family lore. So, interview your relatives. See if someone has knowledge of your Italian ancestral town or towns and other information about your family in Italy. Home sources, like old documents or letters from Italy; your grandmother's Italian passport; notes on the backs of photos or in a diary, can also hold clues to your family's origins in Italy.

Sometimes, though, the knowledge of our Italian ancestors' origins is not known at home or within the family. In that case, please see the "Finding Immigrant Origins" post for ideas for researching this information.

After you have located your Italian ancestral town, you can begin delving into Italian records. Many Italian civil records can be found on Family History Library microfilm or online at www.familysearch.org or on the free Italian website www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it. The time period for which these records are available depends on where in Italy your family is from. For example, civil registration in the Southern Italian region of Calabria began in 1809, whereas in the region of Emilia-Romagna it began in 1866. The existence of civil records in various parts of Italy relates directly to the history of a region or province

and to the overall history of Italy. If civil records are not available for the time period in which your ancestor was born, try locating a baptismal record (most commonly Roman Catholic) for your ancestor. When available, these records are held at the local parish church where the baptism took place. It is not always possible to request these records via email or telephone, so an onsite visit to Italy may be necessary. Italian civil records for certain time periods are also available in the *Archivio di Stato* (Provincial Archive) in the Province where your Italian ancestral town is located. Lastly, Italian civil records can be found in your Italian ancestral town at the Ufficio Stato Civile (Office of Civil Records). This is the local office in every Italian town responsible for both civil record keeping, and for conservation of historical civil records from that town.

After exhausting the civil records for your Italian ancestors, there are many other resources in Italy to continue your family history research.

- **Ecclesiastical records** can date back to the 1500's or 1600's or even before. When available, these records are most commonly found at a local parish church, in a Diocesan Archive or in some cases on microfilm or online.
- **Military conscription records.** Following Italian unification in 1861, military service was required by each Italian male. These records are classified by city or town of birth and year of birth, and in many Italian areas date back to birth years 1840 – 1842. Historical draft records and military service records can typically be found at either the Archivio di Stato in the province where you ancestor lived.
- In addition to civil, ecclesiastical and military records, it is also possible in many areas to research using **notary records** (potentially containing land transactions, marriage contracts and other entries about your family); **cemetery records**; **census equivalents** (such as catasti, fogli di famiglia and other records); and many others.

It is a joy to research our Italian ancestry. And what a great reason for travelling to our magnificent ancestral homeland! Our Italian origins make us uniquely Italian-American. We are Italian by nature and heritage. Let's preserve our special legacy through genealogical research, and then pass it forward to future generations.

-Mary Tedesco

Article courtesy of ancestry.com:

Watch **Genealogy Roadshow**: Tuesdays, Channel 13, 8PM



The Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey

The Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey began as a chapter of POINT - (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together). When POINT officially dissolved in December 2013, our members voted to continue on as an independent organization. We are now known as

The Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey.

The group, originally organized in September 1996 as a POINT chapter, will continue to provide genealogical researchers an opportunity to meet socially, and learn and share information pertaining to Italian research and culture.

We cordially invite genealogical researchers to attend our quarterly meetings. Membership is open to all. In addition to regular meetings we take occasional field trips to genealogical research sites in the New Jersey/New York area.

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**The Italian Genealogy Society
of
New Jersey**
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Your letters and comments are welcomed.
 We reserve the right to edit submitted materials.

The Italian Genealogy Society of NJ does not accept responsibility for errors, omissions, or opinions expressed or implied by contributors.

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Calendar

IGSNJ Future Meetings:

May 2, 2015
August 1, 2015
November 7, 2015
Programs TBA

Passaic County Genealogy Club: February 14: Genealogy Club Meeting

10 a.m. at Lambert Castle
 Program: *Two Early Cemeteries: Ringwood Manor and Erskine, and the History of the Dutch Church (1816) at Boardville-Ringwood*, Presented by Ralph Colfax.

Mar. 14: PCHS Genealogy Club Meeting

10 a.m. at Lambert Castle.
 Program: *What's New at the New Jersey Archives*,
 Presenter: Catherine Medich, Archivist, NJ Archives.

Apr. 11: PCHS Genealogy Club Meeting

10 a.m. at Lambert Castle.
 Program: *Who Was Madeline's Father?*
 Presenter: Lisa Ilowite, Genealogist & Family Historian

Passaic County Historical Society & Lambert Castle Events:

PCHS Quarterly Meeting

February 4, 2015

7 p.m. at Lambert Castle
 Program: *The Vietnam War - Revisited*, Presenter: James Biringier, Marine Corp 1965 to 1969, Vietnam Vet and tour guide at the Vietnam Memorial in Holmdel, NJ.

February 13, 2015

Valentine's Day Masked Ball at Lambert Castle

7 p.m. - 10 p.m. 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Lambert Castle
 Dancing & Light Refreshments, Cash bar.
 Semi-formal attire requested.
 \$25 per person, Reservations required.
 No one under twenty-one years will be admitted.

February 14

Make your own Victorian Valentine

1 p.m.-4 p.m. at Lambert Castle.
 Make your own Victorian style Valentine.
 Regular museum admission applies.

Apr. 4

Make Your Own Spring Basket

1 p.m.-4 p.m. at Lambert Castle
 Regular museum admission applies.

Apr. 24-26

Lambert Castle Victorian Tea

Seating times and program TBA.

Dec. 12 to Mar. 29

Exhibit: *A Closer Look at our Community:*

The Fine Art of Mark Oberndorf.
 3rd floor gallery at Lambert Castle
 Regular admission fees apply.

For more information:
 973- 247-0085 ext 201
www.lambertcastle.org