



# La Notizia Italiana



*POINTers in Person: Lou Costello Chapter #15*

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## National Italian Heritage Month



**UNICO National Calls on Public to Lobby Congress to Pass Italian and Italian American Heritage Month Resolution!**

*Measure introduced by Congressmen Pascrell and Tiberi which would make October Italian and Italian American Heritage Month.*

FAIRFIELD, N.J., Aug. 2, 2011 — UNICO National’s Anti-Bias Committee has succeeded in having a Congressional resolution introduced that would permanently make October “Italian and Italian American Heritage Month” across the United States, UNICO National President Christopher DiMattio announced.

The bill, House Resolution 367, is sponsored by Congressman William Pascrell (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by Congressman Patrick Tiberi (R-Oh), and has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The action has followed a two-year lobbying effort led by members of UNICO National to introduce the measure.

“We’re almost there, but we need to step up our efforts to get the job done,” said DiMattio. “We are calling on all our members and the public as a whole to lobby their Congressman to take this bill out of committee and pass it.”

The bill urges “the people of the United States to observe October of each year as Italian and Italian American Heritage Month” and would establish the month of October as Italian and Italian American Heritage Month.

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“Such efforts would help defuse unjust stereotyping, and make all Americans aware of the enormous contributions Italian Americans make to this country. It would also help educate many about how Italian culture enriches their lives, and make them more aware of the greatness of our civilization and history,” DiMattio said.

A copy of a petition urging the passage of Italian and Italian American Heritage Month is available at this web address:

<http://www.unicocalendar.org>. Supporters are encouraged to print it out, have as many filled out as possible and return them to their Congressional representative. Those wishing to lend their support can also view and use a sample letter of support to be mailed or emailed to their Congressional legislator that is also on the website. Manny Alfano, the chairman of UNICO's Anti-Bias Committee and organizer of the effort, urged supporters to email and call their Congressional legislators. “Remember it's a numbers game and the constituents will get it done,” Alfano said.

To reach your representative by phone, call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202 224-3121. Say your name and you will be put through to his/her office. Then give your name and say you live in the representative's District. Say that you want him/her to become a co-sponsor. Supporters are also urged to call Congressman Darrell E. Issa (R-Ca.), chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and urge him to post the resolution to be voted out of committee as soon as possible for a floor vote. His district office number is 760-599-5000.

UNICO National also led a successful campaign for the designation of October as Italian American Heritage Month in New Jersey in 2009. The measure received bi-partisan support and was signed by former governor Jon Corzine later that year.

Andre' DiMino, UNICO's Chief Media Executive and President of the Italian American One Voice Coalition, said it is urgent to have a national resolution passed at the Federal level mark-

ing October as Italian American Heritage Month.

“It is painfully apparent that Italian Americans are being subjected to an increasing and accelerating attack of negative stereotyping and denigration through the mass media,” DiMino said. “Now more than ever, we must fight back and put out positive messages of all the great things Italians and Italian Americans have done throughout history for this country.”

Alfano, the founder of the Italian American One Voice Coalition who monitors instances of media bias and stereotyping of Italians through his Alfano Digest that is emailed to thousands, agreed.

“Obtaining the designation of October as our national heritage month allows Italians and Italian Americans to celebrate together and work to promote, protect and preserve their heritage and culture,” Alfano said. “Italian Americans are a vital piece of the fabric of the United States and continue to make sizable contributions to all aspects of our culture.”

While being involved in or sponsoring many different educational and cultural programs each year, including the granting of scholarship funds and different achievement awards, UNICO National also promotes Italian American culture through a heritage calendar celebrating and marking the historical accomplishments and birth dates of noteworthy Italians and Italian Americans.

Those individuals that would like information on UNICO National and membership should call 973-808-0035, or visit the organization's website at <http://www.unico.org>.

Contact:

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## LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS FROM ITALIAN AMERICAN HISTORY

*October is Italian American Heritage Month, celebrating the contributions of an estimated 20 million Americans of Italian descent -- the fifth largest ethnic group in the United States.*

- Two signers of the Declaration of Independence were of Italian descent: Maryland's **William Paca** and Delaware's **Caesar Rodney**.
- Four Italians were at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876: **John Martini**, a trumpeter and the last man to see Custer alive; **Augusto De Voto**, **Giovanni Casella**, and Lieutenant **Charles De Rudio**. All four survived the massacre.
- The Planter's Peanut Company and its familiar logo, Mr. Peanut, were created by **Amedeo Obici** and **Mario Peruzzi** in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania in 1908.
- "Chattanooga Choo-choo," "Lullaby of Broadway," and "An Affair to Remember" were some of the songs written by **Harry Warren**, born Salvatore Guaragna.
- The ice cream cone was invented in 1896 by **Italo Marcioni** in New Jersey. Two generations later, in Pittsburgh **Jim Delligatti** invented the Big Mac.
- The only enlisted Marine in U.S. history to win the nation's two highest military honors -- the Navy Cross and the U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor -- was **John Basilone**, a U.S. Marine sergeant, who died at the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II.
- The suburban shopping mall was developed by **William Cafaro** and **Edward J. DeBartolo**. Cafaro pioneered the enclosed shopping mall with his American Mall in Lima, Ohio in 1965. DeBartolo built the first American shopping plaza in the 1940s.
- Between 5,000 and 10,000 Italians fought in the Civil War for both the Union and the Confederacy. Four were Union generals, including **General Luigi Palma di Cesnola**, who received the Medal of Honor and was later the first director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- **Susan Sarandon**, **Bruce Springsteen**, and **Ann Bancroft** are Italian American.

## U.S. TRIBUTES TO CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

*The strong American interest in Christopher Columbus has produced the largest number of Columbus monuments of any nation in the world, according to The Christopher Columbus Encyclopedia (Editor: Silvio A. Bedini; Simon & Schuster, 1992).*

*Other countries that also pay tribute to the 15th century Italian explorer are Mexico, nations in Central and South America, Spain, Italy, and several islands in the Caribbean.*

- The first mention of a Columbus monument in the United States was during the Revolutionary War. In 1782, Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger, an officer with the French forces aiding the colonists, noted in his journal that he saw a statue of Columbus in Philadelphia's Independence Hall.
- In New York City, the local Tammany Society in 1792 raised a Columbus monument to celebrate the tricentennial of his first voyage to the New World. It was a 14-foot obelisk of black marble and bore scenes from Columbus's life.
- The oldest tribute to Columbus still standing is in Baltimore, Maryland. It is a stone obelisk, erected in 1792 on his estate by Chevalier Charles D'Annonneur, the French Consul to the city. In the 1960s, however, the monument was moved to the Samuel Redy Institute on North Avenue and Harford Road.
- The newest monument to Columbus overlooks New York Harbor in Liberty State Park, New Jersey. Dedicated October 9, 1998, it is a three-storey sail of Columbus with bas-reliefs of scenes from his life. Made of travertine marble and bronze, it stands in the park's new Christopher Columbus Plaza. A gift of the Italian government, it was erected by the National Italian American Foundation and the Columbus Citizens' Foundation from private donations totaling \$500,000.
- Boston has the oldest statue of Columbus. It was raised in 1849 (circa) and believed to be sponsored by Marquis Niccolo Reggio, an Italian businessman and consul in Boston for the Papal States, Spain, and the kingdoms of Sardinia and of the Two Sicilies. It stands in Louisburg Square.

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### **Columbus Circle Monument, NYC**

*The monument at the center of Columbus Circle, created by Italian sculptor Gaetano Russo was erected as part of New York's 1892 commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the Americas*

- The largest and most imposing monument to Columbus stands in New York City's Columbus Circle at 59th Street. The 14-foot marble statue of Columbus rests on a granite column 61 feet high (total: 75 feet). It was erected in 1892 from contributions by Italian Americans across the country, led by the Italian American newspaper, **Il Progresso**
- Philadelphia claims the first monument to Columbus entirely funded by public donations. The statue was erected in 1876 by Italian Americans in the city to celebrate the centennial of the Declaration of Independence.
- The oldest monument to Columbus in the western states is in California. It is a marble statue group of Columbus explaining his theory to Queen Isabella while a page looks on. It was donated in 1883 by a wealthy businessman to the Sacramento State Capitol where it still stands today.

- Among the most singular monuments are:
  - The Columbus Doors on the U.S. Capitol in **Washington, DC**, which were cast in 1860 and modeled after Lorenzo Ghiberti's doors to the baptistry in Florence. Made of bronze, they show scenes from Columbus's life.
  - The Columbus Chapel in **Boalsburg, Pennsylvania**, which has many Columbus relics, including his desk and the cross he used to claim the New World for Spain.
  - The Columbus statue in **The Bronx, New York**, which was created by Attilio Piccirilli, one of six Italian American brothers who carved the Lincoln Memorial.
  - The statue of Columbus in **Providence, Rhode Island**, which was cast by Frederic Auguste Bertholdi, the French artist who also created the Statue of Liberty.
- Most of the monuments to Columbus have been sponsored by Italian American groups and private individuals, usually with the help of Italian American newspapers. Many were erected in the late 19th century to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's first voyage. They were generally commissioned from Italian sculptors working in Italy.

- Many American monuments to Columbus share stylistic traits and represent Columbus as young, with shoulder-length hair; wearing a short tabard, or sleeveless coat; holding a globe or a map and standing near an anchor.

- The most unusual portrayal of Columbus is the gilt bronze larger-than-life statue of him with a beard in St. Louis, Missouri. It is the first bronze statue of Columbus in the US and was commissioned in 1886 by a wealthy businessman, who insisted on the facial hair. Objecting, the sculptor carved on the statue: "I knew he didn't have a beard."

**Prepared by: The National Italian American Foundation**



## ITALIAN AMERICAN INFLUENCES IN WASHINGTON, DC

*Most Americans know that the District of Columbia is named after Christopher Columbus, but few realize how great a role other Italians and their descendants have had in building the city and its monuments. Italians helped create Washington's classic architecture and impressive monuments, and many of the city's schools, churches, and federal buildings.*



- **THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL** -- Neapolitan immigrant Attilio Piccirilli and his five brothers carved the statue of Lincoln, which they began in 1911 and completed in 1922. It is 19 feet high and made of 28 blocks of marble, carefully fitted together.

The gifted sculptors, working out of their studio/living complex in the Bronx, also carved the famous lions on the steps of the New York Public Library, and the facade of the Brooklyn Museum among many other works in New York and across America. See Attilio Piccirilli's biography by Joseph V. Lombardo, published in 1944.

- **THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL** -- Using techniques handed down by stone carvers since the Middle Ages, Italian artisans created the gargoyles and statues that decorate the facade of Washington's most famous place of worship.



*Pictured above, top left: Gargoyle at National Cathedral; Above, top right: National Cathedral; Bottom left: Capitol Building; Bottom right: Constantino Brumidi.*

- **THE CAPITOL BUILDING** -- A concrete symbol of American democracy, the Capitol bears the imprint of Italian talent. Between 1855 and 1870, the Italian artist, Constantino Brumidi decorated its interior dome, corridors, and the President's Room where Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.
- **UNION STATION** -- Italian construction workers helped build Washington's train station, which was begun in 1905 and completed in 1908, considered one of the most beautiful train stations in the United States. The six statues that decorate the station's facade were sculpted by Andrew E. Bernasconi between 1909 and 1911.
- **METRO** -- Washington is justifiably proud of its quiet, modern subway system, but few of the thousands of commuters who ride it daily know that more than 60 percent of Metro's 764 subway cars are made in Italy. The DC Transit Authority purchased 466 cars from Breda Costruzioni Ferroviarie in Pistoia at a cost of about \$1.3 million each.



### ***POINTers in Person-***

The POINTers In Person program, an autonomous branch of **POINT - (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together)** was founded in 1992. Our group, Chapter 15, was organized in September 1996. The 21 nationwide chapters of POINTers In Person provide genealogical researchers an opportunity to meet socially, and learn and share information pertinent to Italian research. Each chapter is independent and sets forth its own procedures and schedules of events.

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

Membership in our parent organization, POINT, is not a prerequisite to joining our group; however, it is highly recommended

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#### **The Lou Costello Chapter**

POINTers In Person

Chapter 15

Northern New Jersey

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#### **OFFICERS**

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Your letters and comments are welcomed.  
We reserve the right to edit submitted materials.

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## **Calendar**

### **POINT Chapter 15 Future Meetings: Future Meetings:**

Elmwood Park Municipal Building, 10 AM

**Nov. 5, 2011:**

*Ellis Island: Passage to All Things Possible*

Presenter: Mark Simmons

### **Passaic County Genealogical Society: September 10**

10 a.m. at Lambert Castle:

Genealogy Club Meeting:

Annita Zalenski: *"Paterson's Early Churches"*

### **October 8**

10 a.m. at Lambert Castle:

Genealogy Club Meeting:

Tony Lauriano: *"Writing Your Family History"*

### **Passaic County Historical Society: September 7**

7 PM. at Lambert Castle:

Society Quarterly Meeting:

Program: *"Remembering the Twin Towers..."*

Presenter: Professor Argus Kress Gillespie:

### **Lambert Castle Events:**

**August 10 - October 2**

New Exhibit:

*"Honoring Passaic County Civil War Veterans"*

A major exhibit featuring materials from the Passaic County Historical Society's permanent collection.

### **September 18**

**Civil War Program:**

*"New Jersey's Civil War Odyssey,"*

Presented by S. Thomas Summers,

### **September 25**

**Civil War Program:**

*"Discovering Your Community's Civil War Heritage,"*

Presented by Steven D. Glazer

### **October 1&2**

**History Fair, including Civil War Encampment**

***For more information on PCHS  
& Lambert Castle Events:***

***973- 247-0085 ext 200***

***www.lambertcastle.org***