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ALTRE VOCI

THE E-NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY

July-August 2022 Issue

UPCOMING EVENTS

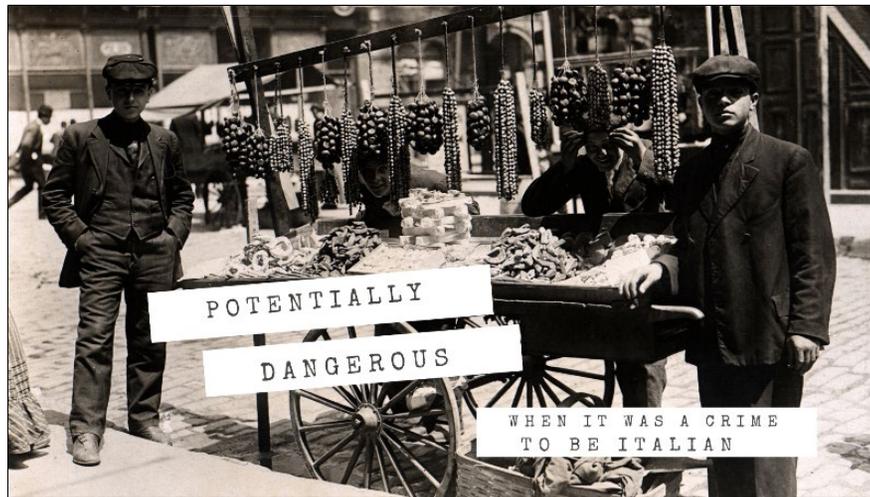
**EVENTS ARE HELD AT THE ITALIAN
CENTER**

Located At: 6821 FAIR OAKS BLVD, CARMICHAEL CA 95608

FILM DOCUMENTARY - MEET THE DIRECTOR

***"Potentially Dangerous,
When It Was A Crime To Be Italian"***

Sunday, July 31 at 2:00pm • Doors open at 1:30



FILM DOCUMENTARY - MEET THE DIRECTOR
"Potentially Dangerous - When It Was A Crime To Be Italian"

Sunday, July 31 @ 2:00 pm / Doors open at 1:30
At the Italian Center, Carmichael (6821 Fair Oaks Blvd, 95608)
Admission \$10

Meet the Director, Zach Baliva, at this screening of his new documentary film, *Potentially Dangerous*. The film reveals the story of Italian immigrants interned and persecuted as America's enemies during World War II.

During World War II, over 600,000 Italians were targeted nationwide with harsh restrictions. In California, 50,000 were placed under curfews and travel restrictions and their personal property seized. Some 10,000 were forced to evacuate from their homes and businesses along the California Coast. Thousands were detained and hundreds interned in military camps in other states.

It was not for anything they had done but only who they were and where they came from. Their Language and culture were repressed during the war years. The collective trauma of these events changed Italian American culture and led many to hide their language, culture, and customs.

In the film you will meet Connie Foran, who watched the FBI raid her home and take her father away and Velio Bronzini, whose mother had a nervous breakdown after the government closed their family business. The film assembles expert historians who put these events in context.

According to the film Director, the film was made to highlight the sacrifice and experience of Italian Americans and raise awareness about this painful episode in history. When Baliva obtained his dual citizenship in Italy, he realized he had little connection to his ancestral story as a third generation Italian American and he wondered why. Then he discovered the reason – Italians in America were persecuted during World War II.

Potentially dangerous examines the lasting effects of that loss of their cultural heritage and the reason they need to connect back to this history to understand its impact on today's Italian Americans.

The Public is invited. Refreshments included.

***Nota Bene:
"Potentially Dangerous"***

The film DVD will be available for sale at the presentation.
Funding to pay for the film to be broadcast on PBS is still needed.

Contact Zach to book a showing or become a sponsor at
zach@potentiallydangerousfilm.com

Friday Night Italian Film Festival



ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL
Friday Night Italian Film

At the Italian Center:
6821 Fair Oaks Blvd, Carmichael 95608

Admission \$10

August 12, 2022 at 8:00 pm

Doors Open at 7:30 pm

Refreshments Included

Italian film is as much a part of Italian culture as the food, music and people. The next feature film in our series, hosted by Bob Masullo, is "Big Night." Enjoy an evening at the Italian Center at our Friday night films. Refreshments served.

"The Big Night"

Big Night is a romantic comedy starring Stanley Tucci, Tony Shalhoub and Isabella Rossellini set in 1950s New Jersey shoreline. Two immigrant brothers from Calabria, Primo (Tony Shalhoub) and Secondo (Stanley Tucci) open an Italian restaurant serving elegant Italian food. But business is not going so well. The owner of a rival Italian restaurant, which serves a typical red sauce, spaghetti and meatballs menu but is very successful, offers to invite his friend, Italian American Jazz singer, Louis Prima to their restaurant to dine. In a final effort to save the restaurant the brothers plan to put on an evening of incredible Italian food for Prima and the Press, which will decide the fate of the restaurant. "A treat for Food and movie lovers." (1996)

[WATCH FILM TRAILER](#)

CLICK TO LEARN MORE About ICS Events and Cultural Programs

***Society Folk Dancers Perform At Festa
Italiana***



PHOTO ABOVE: *Bambini Children's Dance Troupe at the Lodi Italian Festa, July 12, 2022*

SOCIETY FOLK DANCERS PERFORM AT FESTA ITALIANA IN LODI

The Italian Cultural Society folk dance troupes, both children and adult, are once again performing at public events as the Italian American community organizations reopen their events and activities. Summertime is Italian Festival time and many Italian festivals are resuming their role as a celebration of all things Italian.

On June 12th, both our adult folk dancers, **BALLIAMO!**, and our children's **Bambini** folk dancers performed at Festa Italiana in Lodi, California. The newly trained children's dancers performed earlier in the week at the San Francisco Giants Italian Heritage Night game. The Bambini have recruited a new generation of young children to perform and continue the tradition of Italian dance. They were a joy to watch with their enthusiasm and energy.

WATCH: Bambini Dancers Perform at SF Giants Heritage Night

PHOTO BELOW: *BALLIAMO! Dancers performed at the Lodi Italian Festa, July 12, 2022*



Bring A Touch Of Italy To Your Event

The Bambini Dancers are available to perform at special events. To sign up your child or to book this one-of-a-kind children's dance troupe visit their website at icsbambini.com, or email dance coach Diana Quilici at icsbambini@gmail.com.

The Society's adult folkdance troupe **BALLIAMO!** has been preserving and performing the traditional dances of Italy for over 30 years. They have become the number one performing folk dance troupe in northern California. *They are signing up new dancers to perform and are available to book at special events and private parties. To contact the Balliamo dancers send a message to Virginia Petrali at pampet42@yahoo.com or call her at (916) 996-2416*

Little Italy Signs Installed in East

Sacramento!



PHOTO ABOVE: *LITTLE ITALY* in Sacramento! The new signs are up! This sign is located on 59th street across from Corti Brothers near the 59th Street/Highway 50 off ramp.

LITTLE ITALY SIGNS INSTALLED IN EAST SACRAMENTO

As part of the Little Italy Historic District Project, established in October 2021, seven new Little Italy signs have been installed to mark the boundaries of Little Italy. The colorful signs in brilliant green, white and red are a welcome addition to the area. They have been installed on poles and light posts throughout the Little Italy district.

The new signs are located at the corners of 48th and 52nd and 58th streets on Folsom Boulevard and at the corners of 48th and 57th streets on J Street. Another sign is located on 59th street across from Corti Brothers near the 59th street highway 50 off ramp. Another sign is located at the East Portal Park Bocce Courts off Rodeo Way and M street between J street and Folsom Blvd.

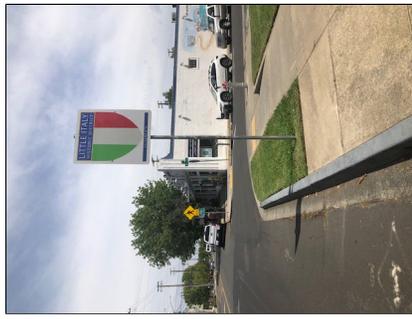
The Little Italy Historic District is bounded by 48th to 59th Street and by J Street and Folsom Boulevard.



PHOTO ABOVE: *LITTLE ITALY* in Sacramento! Sign on left is located at 48th Street and J Street, and the sign on the right is located at 57th Street and J Street.



PHOTOs ABOVE: *LITTLE ITALY* in Sacramento! This sign is located at 58th Street and Folsom Blvd.



PHOTOS ABOVE: *LITTLE ITALY* in Sacramento! Top left sign located at 48th Street and Folsom Blvd., the right sign is located at 51st Street and Folsom Blvd.

PHOTO BELOW: *LITTLE ITALY* in Sacramento! East Portal Park at Rodeo Drive and M Street, between Folsom Blvd. and J Street.



East Sacramento Italians



PHOTO ABOVE: *The Italian Corners Shopping Center at 51st Street and Folsom Blvd.*

ITALIAN ROOTS RUN DEEP IN SACRAMENTO.

Italian Americans were among the earliest pioneers of the city and have been settling here since the Gold Rush. The Italian presence in Sacramento represents over a century and a-half of Italian American history. After World War II, the largest concentration emerged in the East Sacramento area where the Italians established a thriving social community and business district.

The East Sacramento district has been home to many Italian families and farmers who developed the neighborhood. Generations of Italians have grown up and lived in the district and the Italian presence continues with longtime residents and businesses. The high concentration of Italians in East Sacramento established a distinctly Italian flavor to the neighborhood. The designation of the area as a "Little Italy Historic District" reflects the cultural and economic contributions the Italians have made to developing and improving the area.

Today, Sacramento County has over 66,000 Italian Americans, around 5% of the population.

PHOTO BELOW: *The 'Cabbage Patch', the old Italian garden on 'M' Street in East Sacramento in 1938. Many Italians, the Lagomarsino family being the most prominent, farmed in East Sacramento during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Italian farmers set the stage for the influx of Italians to the area.*

Pietro Talini's Nursery & Garden Center located at Folsom and 56th



LEARN MORE: [Little Italy in East Sacramento](#)

First Little Italy Bocce Tournament



FIRST LITTLE ITALY BOCCIE TOURNAMENT IN CALIFORNIA'S NEWEST LITTLE ITALY!

On June 11 and 12, 2022, Little Italy of Sacramento was the scene of a two-day Little Italy Bocce Tournament event at East Portal Park. The event, hosted by the East Portal Bocce Club, drew teams from all over California. The list of teams included teams from Martinez, San Rafael, Stockton, Salinas, Pittsburgh, Antioch, Auburn, Fresno, Chico, Huntington Beach, Penn Valley, Monterey and Sacramento.

The event organizer was Michael Mathis, whose immigrant grandfather, Christopher Cuilla and his brother, Sam Cuilla. Played bocce at East Portal Park back when the courts were dirt. East Portal Park is in the heart of the Little Italy Historic District. Recently, a Little Italy historic district sign was installed at the five-court bocce complex in East Portal Park. Now that Little Italy Sacramento is a reality and the Italian community is supporting the new district with its first Little Italy bocce tournament, we hope to see more activities and festivals follow to celebrate California's newest Little Italy.



Bocce, An Italian American Tradition

Bocce Ball was brought to California in the 19th century and continues to be a tradition in the lives of Italian Americans. During the period 1925 – 1950 bocce was one of the most popular recreation sports among first generation Italian American men.

The first two courts, uncovered, were built in East Portal Park in the early 1960's. Prior to that the courts were dirt. In 1978, all weather covering was built over two of the courts, with bleachers. Today there are five covered courts.

The East Portal Bocce Club operates bocce leagues at the courts with over 50 teams in the program. Bocce in Sacramento continues to be an important cultural feature of Italian American life in Sacramento.

For information about joining the East Portal Bocce Club, visit their website at: <https://eastportalbocceclub.com>



Air Italia - "Sacramento, Italian Style"



SOCIETY RADIO SHOW PRODUCER PHYLLIS CUPPARO WINS 'RADIO PRODUCER OF THE YEAR' AWARD!

Every Sunday at Noon, the public can listen in to “Sacramento Italian Style”, hosted by Society President Phyllis Cupparo. We are proud to announce that Phyllis has won an award as Radio Producer of The Year- 2022 from KUBU Radio station for her weekly broadcasts of The Society’s Italian American Radio Show “Sacramento Italian Style.”

Phyllis has been hosting the show for over 20 years. Her dedication to the Radio Show and knowledge of the Italian American musical experience has been commendable. The award is well deserved.

A major cultural event in the United States was the emergence of Italian American Music in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The “Italian Decade of American Music” spanned the years from 1947 to 1964. In the summer of 1964, Dean *Martins* “*Everybody Loves Somebody*” overtook the Beatles #1 spot on the charts. It was a time when Italian American singers and their music became a mainstay of pop, rock, folk and opera. During the Rock and Roll era, a wave of talented Italian American Singers dominated the pop charts with sounds that became the standard on American jukeboxes and radio and provided the soundtrack of postwar America.

Italian Americans have created a musical legacy that endures and is a source of pride to Italian Americans.

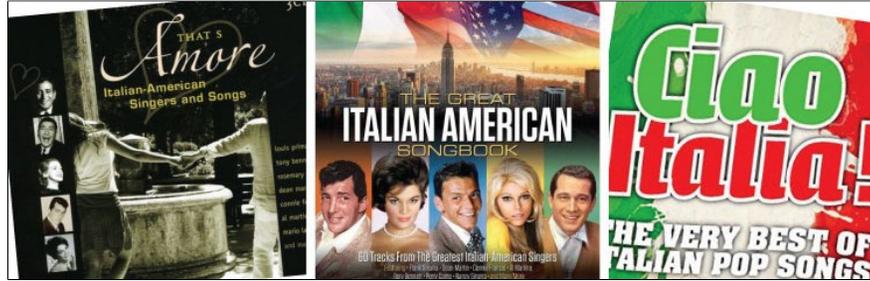
You can enjoy the best of Italian and Italian American music and listen from anywhere in the world every Sunday at noon on

“Sacramento Italian Style.”

*** Download the free KUBU 96.5 FM App to the device of your choice**

*** Or, find *Sacramento, Italian Style* on the internet at accesssacramento.org
then**

click or tap on the KUBU 96.5 FM- The Voice of Sacramento Icon



In Memoriam: Mr. Armando Andreozzi



Mr. Armando Andreozzi, July 1929 – May 2022

“The Italian Center is a place you can learn about your heritage”

The above quote was spoken by Italian Center volunteer Armando Andreozzi to describe what the Italian Center meant to him. According to Armando, “he never lost his Italian identity; the connection was always there.”

Armando was a first generation proud Italian American, born in 1929 and raised in the Little Italy section of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He came to California in 1974. He was first introduced to the Italian Cultural Society at its annual Festa Italiana. Armando served as a center volunteer for many years until he passed away this year at age 92.

Armando was the father of six children. His parents were immigrants from the Abruzzo region of Italy. He retired from the Air Force after serving 27 years, a veteran of Korea and the Vietnam War. He received the Bronze Star. After getting his BA from Golden State University, he spent an additional 20 years serving as a civilian program manager for the Air Force. After his wife of 52 years, Josephine Reale, passed away he dedicated himself to his children.

Armando was an incredible man. He was kind, humble and extremely hardworking. The Italian Cultural Society could always count on Armando for help. He was one of the Society's most valuable volunteers. He had a wonderful sense of humor and wit and was always ready to share a story.

He will be greatly missed and always remembered.

Celebrating the American Dream



PHOTO ABOVE: *Frank's Automotive at 52nd and Folsom, est. 1969*

CELEBRATING THE AMERICAN DREAM By Nick Lettini

It is hard to believe that 53 years ago my parents, Frank and Angela Lettini, ventured out on their own to open Frank's Automotive. This is a brief story about the hard work and dedication of two people working together and making sacrifices to fulfill their American Dream.

Dad and Mom both immigrated to Sacramento between 1958 and 1959. Dad from Basilicata and Mom from Sicily. They left war-torn Italy to find better lives and greater opportunities. It was here in 1961 where they first met. During the summer of 1966, dad married his beautiful bride and together they set off on their journey. Over the next two years they would see their family double with the birth of me and my brother Ray.

Dad was working for another dealer at the time but wanted to venture out on his own. With Mom, they decided it was time to start their own business. By the Fall of 1969 they opened Franks Automotive at 48th and Folsom Boulevard. The location was perfect, in the heart of Italian East Sacramento, a great neighborhood with young families.

The building was less than perfect. The floors were rutted, and no relief was given from the heat during the summer or cold in the winter. Nonetheless, they took great pride in calling it their own. Their first hires were my uncles, Enzo Castellana, Elio Lettini and Angelo Sardo. My aunt Carmela Sardo became the office manager. They too came to the States with the same hard work ethic and values as my parents.

Together they kept the German cars of East Sacramento in fine-tune. Soon they outgrew their location. During the fall of 1972 they purchased land at 52nd and Folsom Blvd. There they built what is now their current location. By July 4th in 1973 everything was moved over from the old location and they opened their doors.

During those early years, mom would bring dad his lunch and dinner. During the evenings, while my father was working, she would bathe us in the washbasin, put us in our pajamas and lay us down in the back of her station wagon. Watching my parents working together for the common good of the family was very inspiring and influential in who we would become.

By 1976, Ray and I {Nick} began to take more active roles. During our summer breaks, dad would take us to work. As 7 and 8-year-olds we proved to be more comic relief than actual help. Our uncles, and aunt became our teachers. From them we would learn the skills we carry to this day. Dad fueled our passion and at an early age he introduced us to the shop's motto, "If you like our work, tell others. If not, tell us."

Through the years many more would join our work family. My sweet aunt Mary Castellana replaced aunt Carmela. My role at the shop evolved, from apprentice to technician, to manager, and now owner. At the same time my father was idling back and allowing me to grow into my new role. He had 40 years invested in growing his business but realized the time had come to let go.

Time had taken its toll on my father, but he would come around and reminisce. Mom spends

her time taking care of the home, garden and dad. They are always eager to spend time with their grandchildren and my children Lilliana and Luca. Passing along their stories and wisdom. Together we look back at what they have created and take pride in all they have accomplished.

Sadly, Frank Lettini passed away in May 2022. His son Nick remains at the helm of the auto shop Frank and Angela Lettini created. The shop is located in the heart of the Little Italy Historic District of East Sacramento at 52nd and Folsom Blvd.



Columbus Transcontinental Highway Sign

THE COLUMBUS TRANSCONTINENTAL HIGHWAY SIGN

In 1975, the California State Legislature established the Columbus Transcontinental Highway on interstate 10 in southern California. A sign marking the Columbus highway was installed. The Resolution naming the highway was sponsored by Italian American Legislators of the period to honor the Italian American community.

A Resolution to remove the designation of the Columbus Transcontinental highway and the Highway sign was recently introduced in the State Assembly by Assembly member Richard Bloom. The Resolution was sponsored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the City of Los Angeles, and The University of Los Angeles. The new Resolution would give naming rights to a new sign to the Native American tribes. The sign itself has been stolen. By whom, one can only guess.

The legacy of the Italian American Legislators of the past is being lost in the present as is that of Italian Americans both past and present. The removal of the Columbus highway sign is part of a concerted action by the government and other institutions and native American tribes to erase all references to Columbus and eliminate all monuments in honor of him, **which is the stated goal of the new Resolution.**

The Resolution contains many false, misleading and mean-spirited claims about Columbus and is based on an historically inaccurate telling of history solely to demonize Columbus and justify the action. The Resolution will move to the State Senate for passage.

By a combination of official decree and mob rule over the past two years, many Columbus

statues have been removed or vandalized and Columbus holidays abolished.

What is clear from all the Columbus bashing taking place is that Italian Americans are not well represented by the city and county of Los Angeles nor by the California State Government nor by California institutions. The Italian American population of California is over 1.5 million people and some 350,000 live in Los Angeles County. Nationwide, the census counts the number of people who self-identify as Italian American at 18 million. The census estimates there are millions more.

The aspirations of the Italian American community to maintain their heritage are not being listened too by our institutions. Rather, those institutions reflect the resentful and vindictive voices of those who would rewrite our history and diminish our traditions by targeting the 15th century explorer.

The Columbus Day Holiday in California.

Until recently, Columbus Day was an observed State Holiday in California. In September 2021, the California Legislature removed the Columbus Day holiday from the list of observed State holidays in California and elevated Native American Day to take its place as an observed holiday. The move was approved by the Governor and sponsored by the Native American tribes.

This follows the action by the Governor and State Legislative leaders to remove the Columbus statue from the State Capitol Rotunda in 2020 against the will of the Italian community.



PHOTO ABOVE: *The marble statue of Columbus and Queen Isabella was removed from the CA State Capital Building Rotunda in 2020*

The Story of the Internment and Relocation of Italian Americans during World War II

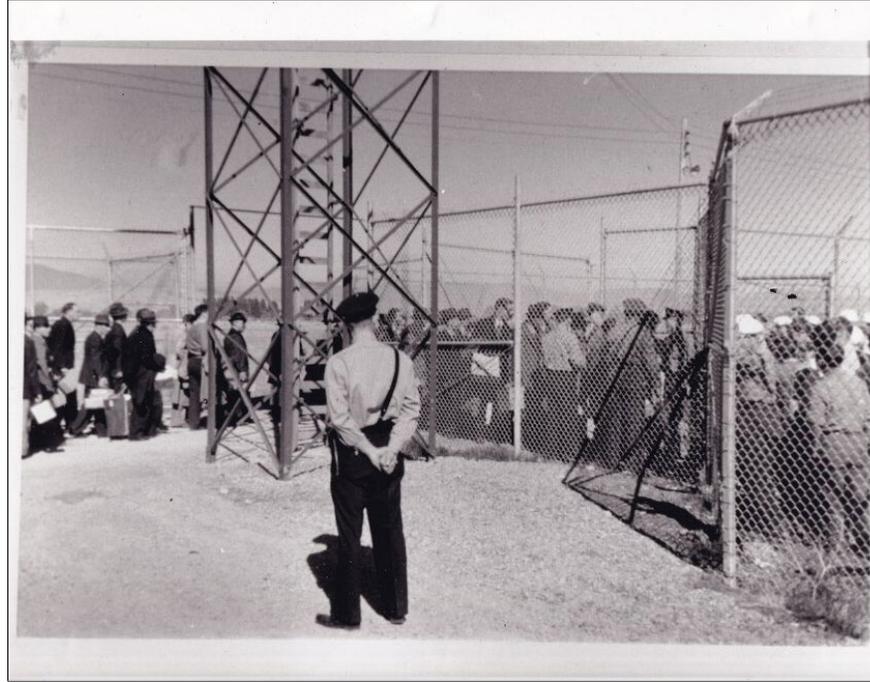


PHOTO ABOVE: *Italian internees arriving at Camp Bella Vista in Missoula, Montana. The Italian internment occurred before that of the Japanese.*

UNA STORIA SEGRETA

The Italian American experience is full of painful episodes of bigotry against them. The assault on Columbus, Columbus Day and the Columbus statues and monuments erected to honor Italian Americans is another chapter in that history of racially motivated prejudice.

During World War II, it was in California that Italian American immigrants were mistreated and restricted the most. It was a time when their loyalty was questioned. An estimated million Italian Americans served in the Armed services during World War II, some 10% of the American fighting force. They had proven their loyalty in World War I and then had to prove it again.

Thousands were arrested at the beginning of the war in 1941 in California as the FBI knocked on their doors at midnight and raided their homes and held them for questioning.

Over 50,000 Italians born in Italy were affected in California and over 600,000 nationwide. At the outbreak of the War, Italian Americans were the largest immigrant group in California and in the United States.

Hundreds were interned for the duration of the war in military camps alongside Japanese internees. Those interned were mostly community leaders, newspaper editors, language teachers, and members of Italian community organizations. Italian language schools were closed as were the Italian newspapers. La Capitale, the Italian newspaper in Sacramento since 1906 was shut down and never published again.

Across the nation, their cameras, guns and radios were confiscated. They had to carry identity permits and were subjected to a 6:00 curfew. They could not travel more than 5 miles from their home. All without any evidence of wrongdoing or due process. Any violation could result in imprisonment.



PHOTO ABOVE: *Members of the Buccelatto and Cardinelli families removed from their homes in Pittsburg, CA, living in migrant housing in Oakley.*

Possibly the most destructive action by the government was the forced relocation of over 10,000 Italians from the coastal zones of California. Under the travel restrictions, they were not allowed to go within a mile of the California coast. The Italians were concentrated in the coastal zones. Thousands of Italian fishermen in Monterey, Santa Cruz, Eureka, San Pedro, and San Francisco, who dominated 80% of the west coast fishing industry, were forced to give up their boats to the Navy. Many Italians lost their livelihoods and businesses.

Whole Italian communities along the coast were relocated. Pittsburg and Monterey, California, were primarily Italian fishing communities at the outbreak of the War. More than

3,000 had to leave Monterey. In Pittsburg, virtually every family was affected. More than 1500 Italian Americans, nearly all of them women and children were forced to leave town as security risks. The oldest resident forced out of Pittsburgh was a 97 -year- old man, removed in his bed. All pleas for clemency failed.

“It Was All A Mistake”

On Columbus Day, Oct 12, 1942, the restrictions were lifted. From the start, the Attorney General of the United States, Francis Biddle, had cautioned that these people were innocent and should have not been restricted. That there was no proof of disloyalty. **Their only crime was being of Italian ancestry.**

Still the government denied these events had taken place until Italian American historians and activists pieced together the story and convinced the Government to acknowledge the wartime measures taken against the Italian Americans. Until then, the government denied they had happened and would not release the documents which they argued were classified.

It was almost 60 years after the events occurred before the Congress and the President formally acknowledged, in the ***Wartime Violation of Italian American Civil Liberties Act of 2,000***, the impact of the World War II restrictions on the Italian American community. There has been no apology.

Canadian government recently apologized for its internment and harsh treatment of its Italian population during the war years.

Los Angeles County and other local government bodies of the time demanded that all Italians in the United States be interned during the war, citizen or not. Now Los Angeles County, in a repeat of their historic bias against Italian Americans, wants to remove the most revered symbols of the Italian American people from the public square.

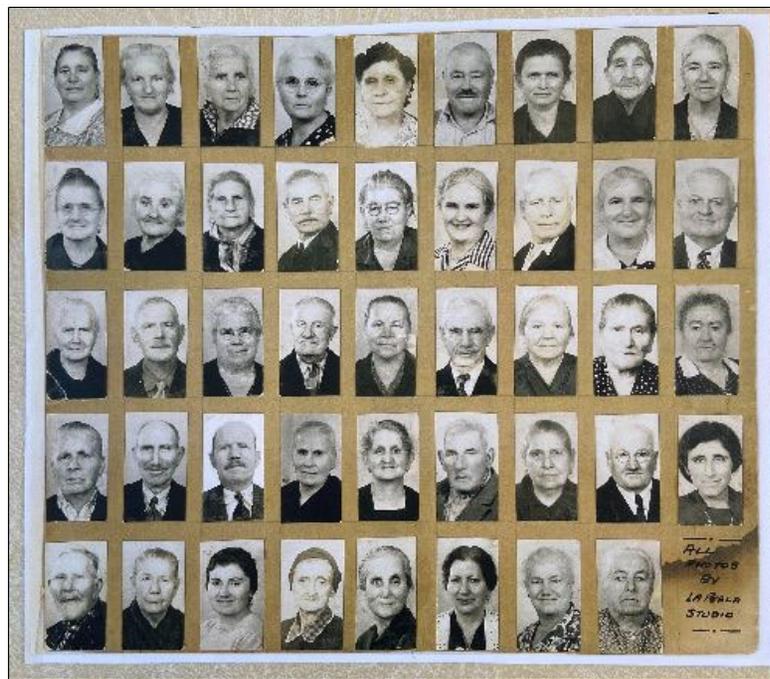


PHOTO ABOVE: *The mugshots of elderly interned Italians forced to evacuate from their homes along the coast.*

A Knock at Midnight

For decades, historians had denied that the World War II events happened. US history books denied that Italian Americans were affected by wartime restrictions. Parents who mentioned the events to their children were not believed because this history was not included in their history books. Italian students who wrote papers about the topic in college were given lower grades as the professors did not know the story. Italian American students who raised the story in class were told it never happened. Teachers had been teaching for decades that Italians were not interned, relocated or restricted, that only the Japanese were, only to find out they had been teaching a false history.

The impact of the restrictions was widespread and the effect on the personal lives of those who were directly affected can only be imagined. Imagine the pain of these Italians who were prohibited from speaking Italian, "the enemy's language," in public. Imagine the fear of those who believed they and their children were going to be deported. According to one of the affected children, ***"People became so frightened that they were afraid of a knock on the door. You never knew who was going to be taken away."***

committed suicide when their loyalty to the country they loved was questioned. One elderly Italian man who took his life when he received notice he would be restricted left a note; ***"I thought of myself as a good person, but I find myself deceived."*** He jumped off an 8-

story building in San Francisco. Another, a fisherman in Vallejo, California, cut his throat with a butcher knife. Another threw himself in front of a train in Richmond, California. In Stockton, California, an elderly man, who could not live with the stigma of being an enemy alien hanged himself.

Many changed their Italian names. Others stopped speaking Italian. **They felt “degraded so much during the War.”** Families were separated. In one small California town, 7 Italian American mothers each had four sons in the US Army but 6 were restricted from being able to visit them on their bases. Mothers could not visit their children in a hospital and families could not attend a relative’s funeral.

PHOTO BELOW LEFT: *Photo of Caterina Cardinelli, who was evacuated from her Pittsburg home. She needed a travel permit, even on the day she left.*

PHOTO BELOW RIGHT: *Catherine Buccellato and her son, Nick. Like so many others, Nick came home on leave from serving his country only to find his home empty. His mother was forced to evacuate her Pittsburgh, CA home.*



Silencing A Culture

The impact of the wartime restrictions was devastating to the Italian communities in California. After the war, it was not ok to be too Italian. Many downplayed their ancestry. The Italian American community never fully recovered from the active repression of their culture during the war

Today’s Italian Americans are claiming their heritage and culture and rebuilding their sense

of community by remembering where they came from. Their ancestors would be proud that today's Italian Americans are fighting to maintain and protect their legacy. The need for this story to be included in the nation's history books is important to the memory of those affected and to help repair the damage.

For Italian Americans, Columbus Day and the Columbus statues and monuments, are important symbols of their acceptance in American Society. They are a celebrated part of the Italian American cultural heritage. That quest for acceptance remains unfinished considering the rising discrimination against the symbols of their identity and their American lives. Their story should be told, their cultural heritage and symbols of that heritage should be respected, protected, and accepted.

They have earned it!

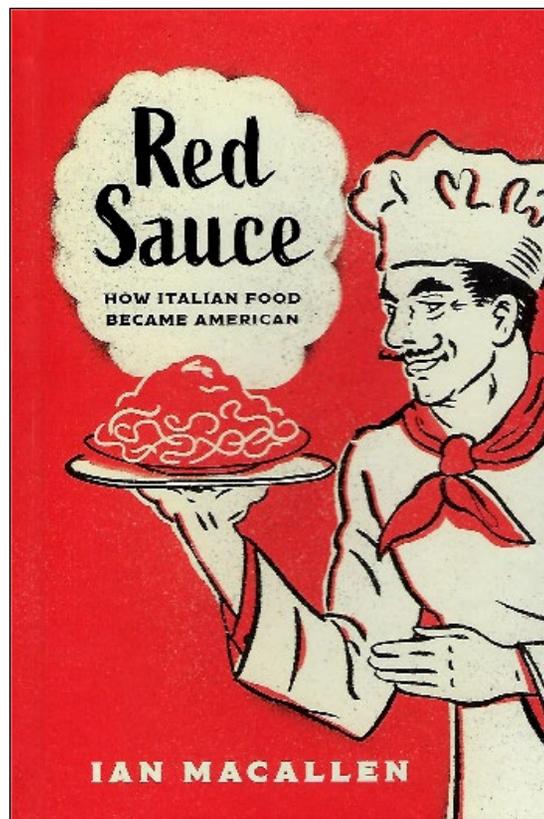
PHOTO BELOW: *Photo of the Missoula Internment Camp*



LEARN MORE: WWII Italian America

LEARN MORE: Visit the UNA STORIA SEGRETA website

Red Sauce - How Italian Food Became American



Ever wonder where the foods Americans consider “Italian” come from?

Well, the short answer isn't Italy, at least not directly.

After years of study Ian MacAllen has come up with a lot of theories on this question, many of the answers, and published them in an ambitious volume: “Red Sauce: How Italian Food Became American.” {Rowman & Littlefield, 2022}

Don't be dissuaded by his surname. On MacAllen's maternal side, the author's *nonno* hails from the Molise region while his *nonna* has roots in both Napoli and Sicily. Furthermore, his wife, Annmarie Pisano, also has Italian roots, and the two have been eating Italian food – both in Italy and in America – all their lives. MacAllen stands on firm ground.

MacAllen traces the evolution of traditional Italian American food, from its origins in Italy to its transformation into mainstream America alongside the blending of Italian American otherness into a national Italian American identity, with food as one of the building blocks of that identity.

Drawing on inspiration from Southern Italian cucina, early Italian immigrants to America developed new recipes and popularized foods like pizza and baked lasagna that had once been seen as overly foreign. Eventually, these foods became part of the national Italian

American diet and entrenched within the American diet, expanding from an ethnic food into a widespread cultural phenomenon.



For most of the 20th century in the United States, “red sauce” became synonymous with Italy and Italian cuisine. MacAllen tells us the history of spaghetti and meatballs, veal parmigiana, manicotti, and many other dishes not found in Italy, but which are {or were} common in “red sauce joints” on the American side of the Atlantic.

It may be better to say “were” because “red sauce joints” – old style Italian American eateries with checkered tablecloths, fiaschi {straw-covered bottles of Chianti wine}, and pictures of Mount Vesuvius, the Colosseum and Pisa’s leaning Tower on the walls -- have been disappearing for decades, as MacAllen ruefully notes. If you find “chicken parm” today it is more likely to be in an American diner or one of the faux red sauce joints like Olive Garden or Macaroni Grill, which are pale corporate imitations of the real thing.

True red sauce restaurants, MacAllen notes, had their heyday in the years of the massive immigration of Italians to the United States, 1880 to 1924, and the decades that immediately followed. They offered filling food, served in abundance, and reasonable prices. It wasn’t gourmet but it was good. And the restaurant was often the basement of the owner’s home.

They didn’t serve the foods of their homes in Italy, mainly those of the Campania {Naples} and the Sicily region, but drew upon them, adapting them to what was and what was not available here.

MacAllen contends the main difference between the food of Italian America and that of Italy was meat, especially beef. In Italy, particularly in southern Italy {where many of the immigrants had come from} meat was scarce and expensive: here it was cheap and plentiful. Hence, meatballs and steak alla pizzaiola. Heavy meat sauce was not as commonly used in Italy.

More recently, while red sauce has been displaced by “northern Italian food,” there has been a resurgence of modern red sauce menus.

This book review was written by Society member, Bob Masullo.

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<input type="checkbox"/> PAESANI ___ \$35 Senior or Student ___ \$40 Individual ___ \$45 Family <i>Receive Newsletter, Special Invitations & Notices, and Society Membership Card</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> \$125 CONTRIBUTORE <i>Receive both the "Bella Italia" license plate frame and a colorful 3' x5' Italian Flag with grommets.</i>	
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The success of our Italian American organizations like the Society depend on the support of the Italian community.

THERE ARE SEVERAL TAX-DEDUCTIBLE WAYS TO SUPPORT THE ICS:

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