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Italian Cultural Center & Museum
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East Sacramento's 48th Street Italians

Italian Roots Run Deep in East Sacramento: The Little Italy Recognition Project

PHOTO BELOW:

East Sacramento 48th Street Italians hold a Reunion in 2003. Pictured are: Nini Lazzarini, Bill Skarles, Frank & Kay Ghilarducci, Willie Da Prato, Dick Sambucetti, David, Trish & Gina Mori, Deno Paoli and other street residents.



Italian roots run deep in East Sacramento.

Italians were among the earliest pioneers of Sacramento and began settling here with the Gold Rush of the 1850's. During the early and mid-20th century a large concentration of Italians settled in the East Sacramento district of the City. Originally a rural area, by the 1920's Italian immigrant families and truck farmers were settling in and developing the area. Eventually, the continuing immigration of Italians into the area from the 1920's through the 1960's gave it a distinct Italian flavor and identity into the present.

Little Italy Emerges before World War II

The geographical heart of this "little Italy" neighborhood is generally identified as the 24 square block zone between 48th street and 59th street which is bounded by J Street and Folsom Boulevard. Folsom Boulevard and J street become the main business streets for the Italian businesses in the area.

By World War II the Italians were the largest immigrant group in the United States and in California. In East Sacramento, they established a thriving business district to serve their needs as a community. They also created social and communal institutions like St Mary's Church, built in the area in 1948, established Bocce leagues in East Portal Park which continue today and created a number of Italian community organizations which are still active.

The Italian presence in the historic Italian heart of East Sacramento represents over a century of Italian American history embedded in the roots of the area. Generations of Italian Americans have grown up and lived in the area and the Italian presence continues with longtime residents and businesses.



PHOTOS ABOVE:

ABOVE LEFT: Louise Da Prato, Gloria Da Prato Tomei, Willie Da Prato, Peter Tomei,
Lorraine Sambucetti

ABOVE RIGHT: Laura Roberti, Kay Ghilarducci, Carl, Bob Dinelli, Rose Cooper

The 48th Street Gang

One of the early streets settled in the area by the Italian immigrants was 48th Street. The two-block long section of 48th street between J Street and Folsom Boulevard was predominately Italian from the start as many Italian families settled there during the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's. By World War II, nearly two dozen Italian families lived on that section of the street. It is estimated that some 80 Italian adults and children resided on those two blocks during the early years.

At the time, some 20 of the 48th street teenagers who hung out together, both boys and girls, and who were children of the immigrants, referred to themselves as ***the 48th Street Gang***. We are fortunate that some of these kids still are alive and proud of their story which they have shared with the Society. While many are in their 90's, they provide us with a living memory of the original Italian immigrants who settled the area. In 2003, some 50 of these Italian old timers came together for a reunion celebration and to share memories. Several photos of that celebration are contained in this article.

PHOTOS BELOW:

BELOW LEFT: Carl Mori and Willie Da Prato

BELOW RIGHT: Laura and Deno Paoli



The Italian Families

Based on the information given by some of ***the 48th Street Gang*** we have identified many of the families that lived on the street by name and the houses they lived in.

From 1931 to 1944, the Louis Market, founded by Louis DeFazio, operated at the Corner of 48th and J street. The Louis Market was a prime employer for many of the Italians in the area.

Among the families living on 48th street during this era which we identified were the **Gianino, Malerbi, Gianini, Da Prato, Belli, Sambocetti, Baruffaldi, Sambocetti, Mallegni, Barsetti, Stefani, Paoli, Ghilarducci, Mori, Da Prato, Sorocco, Cottini, Tornatorre, Dinelli, Gaddi, and Gerbi families.**

Many of these families immigrated from the Lucca area of Tuscany which is one of the main Italian regional groups in Sacramento. Other streets in East Sacramento have also had similar concentrations of Italians.

The Italian Cultural Society would like to give special recognition to Gloria Tomei and La Verne Baruffaldi Britton for providing the information and photos about the 48th Street Italians contained in this article, Both are now in their 90's and reside in Sacramento.



PHOTO ABOVE:

Catherine Giannini, Rosalie Giannini, Dora Da Prato

The Little Italy Recognition Project

The amazing story of East Sacramento's Little Italy neighborhood and the Italian people that made that story needs to be claimed and told and kept alive to inspire the future of the Italian Community.

Tens of thousands of Italians live in the greater Sacramento area and they need to know

about how bands of Italian immigrants who settled in Sacramento neighborhoods across the city forged a vibrant Italian American community. One whose legacy is still with us.

We are fortunate that the sons and daughters of these early pioneers to the city have left us with a record and a memory of those people and their accomplishments. There is much more to the story that needs to be told. In 1992, the Italian community created an exhibit documenting the early Italians of Sacramento. Part of that exhibit is on display at the Italian Cultural Center in Carmichael. But more needs to be done.

In order to continue the progress that has been made to celebrate our local history, A "Little Italy" planning committee has been organized to work with the City for recognition of the historic Little Italy District in East Sacramento. Some of the goals of the committee are to establish banners and signs that highlight the area to show off its Italian roots. Other goals include collecting more of the history of this place and its Italian people.

For more information contact Bill Cerruti at the Italian Cultural Society at: italy1@surewest.net.

You're Invited to READ "Reclaiming Little Italy in Sacramento" for more information about this project.

Click on photo or button below to access the article.



READ: Reclaiming Little Italy In Sacramento

Farro: The Mother Of All Grains



Farro: The Mother Of All Grains

Farro is one of the world's oldest grains. The Romans cultivated it to feed their legions. It was a staple food throughout the Mediterranean region and nourished the Italian people for thousands of years. It was later replaced by wheat which is better suited for making pasta and breads and has a higher crop yield. **Farro** is still grown in Italy in certain areas and primarily in the wild hills of the *Garfagnana* area above the walled town of Lucca in Tuscany. Tuscans use **Farro** like barley in soups and salads and meat dishes. While traditionally a peasant dish, its popularity has increased since the 1980's as a desired specialty item because of its high nutrient value. It's an excellent source of fiber, protein and Vitamin B.

One of the most popular brands is "*Farro della Garfagnana*" and can be purchased in most grocery stores and specialty markets. Next time you visit Lucca be sure to try *Minestra di farro Lucchese*.

Enjoy the **FARRO SOUP VIDEO RECIPE** by clicking the video below, or view by clicking this link: <https://youtu.be/2pjpgsIxvWQ>





Bocce: An Italian Tradition



New Bocce Courts Open In Carmichael Park

After years of planning and fund raising the newly constructed Bocce courts in Carmichael Park are ready for use! The courts are located in the Carmichael Park panhandle right behind the Italian Cultural Center.



BOCCE - AN ITALIAN TRADITION

Currently there are two courts with plans for additional courts in the future. A Grand opening is planned over the summer and we hope members of the Society, many of whom live in the Carmichael and surrounding areas, will take advantage of the courts. The Italian Cultural Society will incorporate Bocce events into its cultural events programs down the road as the Italian Center opens up its programming.

Bocce is a favorite Italian pastime and has been played in Italy for 2000 years. The game ranks second to soccer as the Italian national pastime. The name Bocce was coined by the Romans. From Caesar Augustus to George Washington, Bocce has a long history.

Bocce is a unique cultural tradition in the Italian communities, one often handed down from one generation to another. Italian immigrants are credited with bringing the sport to the United States and popularizing it.

Bocce is a big sport in northern California with major Bocce complexes operated by Italian American organizations in many California cities. Many Bocce complexes operate leagues which compete against teams from different cities in playoffs that can lead to national and international tournament titles.

In Sacramento, the East Portal Bocce Club, located in the heart of East Sacramento's Little Italy neighborhood, sponsors some 60 teams. Future plans for the Carmichael Bocce courts include the establishment of league play.

The Italian community can thank Society member Shirley Simi and her family for being the driving force behind the creation of the new Bocce Courts. Their dedication to the project and the support of the Carmichael Park Foundation got the courts across the finish line. And thanks to all the members of the Italian American and Carmichael community who supported the project.

The courts will be managed by the Carmichael Park District with plans to have the courts ready for reservation play by May 1. Currently the courts are open for play on a first come first serve basis for an hour at a time. For information about use of the courts, free lessons and future leagues contact the park district at info@carmichaelpark.com or visit the bocce ball page on their website at www.carmichaelpark.com/bocce-ball-courts.

“LETS PLAY BOCCE”



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The success of our Italian American organizations like the Society depend on the support of the Italian community.

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