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A Brief History
Of
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HON. ANTONIO A. CAPOTOSTO
Giudice Della Corte Superiore

12-6-77

BY BEN BOYDEN

MORE than \$65,000,000 worth of Rhode Island real estate is owned by Italians.

In the State the Italian population is today conservatively estimated to exceed 75,000 and is about equally divided between those born in this country and those who first saw the light of day in the picturesque land of Dante, Verdi, Columbus, Cabot, Marconi, Garibaldi and Michelangelo.

That Italians in Rhode Island should have gained control of so much real estate, to say nothing of their wonderful accumulation of wealth in agriculture and industry, is one of the social and economic marvels of the State.

When one considers that there were not more than a dozen Italian families in Rhode Island until 1880 the achievement of this hardy, honest and thrifty race from the Old World stands out as a matchless accomplishment in the colorful annals of the State's history.

Surely there is nothing in the modern history of the Commonwealth that can even approach this wave of material progress and when one considers it seriously and recalls that the Italians piled up this great treasure without much assistance from the so-called American elements in Rhode Island's population, the accomplishment assumes greater importance and magnitude. It is certain that those who have been so active in the work of spreading propaganda concerning the "inferiority of the Italians and the wonderful virtues of the Nordic races" will do a heap of mental stock-taking before opening a new campaign of abuse and libel against Italians.

How these happy and buoyant people came to



HON. LUIGI De PASQUALE
Assistente Procuratore Statale

12.6.77

Rhode Island in the early '80s and through their industry and thrift became one of the dominant factors in the life of the State is a bit of romance that is as rich in color and detail as any to be found.

THE romance covers a span of 40 years and some day will be written in a creditable manner and by one in whose veins flows Italian blood, but we must wait for that day. Up to the present time the Italians have been too busy getting a firm footing to chronicle the events and romance of their experiences.

But now that they have entered the professions and members of their race hold high positions in the fields of education, law, government, medicine and the arts, it is only natural to expect that one of their number will produce a volume that will do ample justice to the industry, sacrifices and aspirations of his race in the land of Roger Williams.

WHAT the next two decades will develop is a matter of conjecture, but leaders in the Italian life of Rhode Island assert, and without the slightest trace of boastfulness, that they will make far greater progress in that interval than has been made since the first seeds of the colony were planted in 1880. They promise to double their wealth and, much better, to make great strides toward the goal of every person of Italian blood, namely, to become men and women who will represent the very best in American citizenship.

That they will succeed in this effort is certain, for they usually do what they start out to do. Furthermore, they are moving along well organized lines and are being directed by exceedingly able men and women. This corps of American citizenship builders is being augmented each year by an ever-increasing number of college men.

This year more than 200 young men and women from the Italian colonies in Providence, Cranston, North Providence, Westerly, East Providence, Thornton, Johnston and Pawtucket will enter the various colleges of the State. This number will represent the greatest effort ever made by Rhode Island Italians to acquire higher education and mental equipment that is today required by real leaders.

For many years the classes in Brown, College of



CAV. VITO N. FAMIGLIETTI

Education, Providence College and other institutions have been well sprinkled by men and women of Italian blood, but this year's crop of prospective degree holders will be a record-breaker.

Federal Hill

SO much vicious propaganda against the Italians has been printed in the newspapers and magazines that it is difficult for a person, however fair-minded he or she may be, to obtain a real and truthful perspective of the Rhode Island Italians.

Perhaps the best method by which we can obtain a closeup of these people is to take time for a worthwhile visit to Federal Hill. New York, Philadelphia, Boston and other big cities have their Italian sections or colonies as they are styled, but in none of the big centres of population can a better Italian quarter be found.

Federal Hill, with its crowded tenement houses, lack of playgrounds, hospital equipment and countless other things that contribute to the well-being of those forced to live in our cities is not all it ought to be, but it is so superior to the Italian sections in other cities that it stands out like a towering oak in a grove of scrubby pines and crooked alders.

Visit Federal Hill, walk through the streets and listen to the chatter and laughter of the children, go into the restaurants and talk with the patrons. You will find attorneys, doctors, artisans, bankers and business men, and when you have talked with them, you will have a better understanding and appreciation of Federal Hill.

Pervading the Federal Hill colony you will discover a spirit that is unquenchable. It is this spirit—a spirit that has actuated the colony for 40 years and one that will never die, that captures your imagination. You cannot escape it because it is a definite thing in the life of the section and a golden element that will continue through succeeding generations. Just as Columbus and Cabot imbibed freely at the fountain of courage and perseverance, these modern crusaders, mindful of the rewards that their ancient kinsmen garnered because of their endurance and fortitude, are determined to conquer. Nothing can prevent their forward and onward march. There may be certain obstacles that for a



DO'TT. ANTONIO G. FIDANZA

brief space of time will check their enthusiasm, but nothing that will stop them completely.

The Johnson Bill

THE Johnson Immigration Bill, which virtually ends immigration from Italy, somewhat dampened their ardor and enthusiasm, but the disappointments that accompanied the passage of that bill are a thing of the past.

Ask a Rhode Island Italian about that bill and he will tell you in plain and forceful language that it is unfair legislation. Rhode Island Italians do not question the right of the United States to legislate as it wishes, but they regard the Johnson Bill as a direct slap at their character.

"That bill was passed because Congress held that we are not good enough to become real Americans. Just look at what we have done in Rhode Island! Do you want any better evidence of our fitness to become Americans?" That is the comment of the average Italian concerning the Johnson Bill.

And the Federal Hill resident will present a better argument by saying: "You Americans fail to mention your faults or the sins of your bad men. You boast of Lincoln, Washington, Fulton, Franklin, Edison, Wilson and others who have contributed to your greatness. Why can't we point to our men of greatness? We have them and today they are world figures, but we, contrary to the rules of fair play, are judged by the few bad men in our colony. We have bad men, but is any race free from them?"

No, indeed, and few national colonies can show progress equal to that on Federal Hill.

A Thrifty People

WHEN Tony, ever-smiling and good-natured Italian, draws his wages on Saturday night, he hastens home, and placing the money on the kitchen table, his good wife Carlotta divides the treasure into three piles; the first is to be expended for household ex-



HON. MICHAEL J. TURANO
Giudice Del Terzo Distretto Giudiziario

penses during the coming week; the second and the smallest of the three goes to Tony for personal expenses, and the third pile is the stipend that is carried to the bank on Monday morning.

Saving is one of the inherent traits of the Italian people, and that third pile of greenbacks, it will vary in size according to the earning capacity of Tony, is just as sacred as the first which buys the necessaries of life for the embryo American family.

Carlotta never heard of the budget system, but back in Italy where money is scarce, this young woman was taught the value of thrift. She appreciates that if one is to get along in this world, and particularly in the land of Uncle Sam, it is essential to save. Tony is the boss in his own home and the arbiter of all questions that deal with his family, for it is an age-old tradition and custom among Italian people to recognize the husband as the absolute dictator in the home, but Tony, drawing from the experience of his ancestors, has sufficient business acumen to appoint the faithful and economical Carlotta to the important post of chancellor of the exchequer.

Is it any wonder that the Italians in Rhode Island have amassed such great wealth

Their system is unbeatable and tells the story of their success in this State. There is nothing in the modern history of Little Rhody that is comparable with the accomplishments of the Italians during the last 40 years and those who are in a position to know the real facts assert that the growth of the various Italian colonies in the State will continue.

The story of Carlotta and Tony can be multiplied thousands of times for it is typical of any Italian family. There are comparatively few that have been here for a period of five years who cannot show a



CAV. JOSEPH CAVEDON

good bank account and a big percentage are home owners.

That a big section of these people living within the confines of the State have not been assimilated is not due to the refusal of the newcomers to become thoroughly Americanized but rather to the lack of understanding on the part of the so-called American groups.

The average American is unable to speak Italian and knows but little of Italy's wonderful history, hence his inability to sense that the Italian immigrant possesses virtues that make valuable contributions to the social and political fabric of America.

That misunderstanding has retarded the work of assimilating these people and in many sections has developed racial controversies, but out of the welter of racial feuds the Italians have been victorious. Today the men and women of that sturdy race say that they have made good in the land of their adoption and that they have actually contributed a great deal to America.

Are Church Builders

IN a land where money speaks right out in town meeting and dominates in every field except that of religion the Italians have a right to claim success.

In Rhode Island they control more than \$65,000,000 worth of real estate, but their realty holdings merely represent a portion of their wealth. They have earned money and saved it, but in doing so have not forgotten the teachings of their ancestors. They have held firm to their Christian ideals and in the few years that have elapsed since the first of their race landed in this State they have built 14 churches. Ten of these churches are Roman Catholic and four represent Protestant denominations.

The church building proclivities of these people are cited for the purpose of illustrating that Rhode Island Italians are religious and that they have not abandoned the paths of righteous living in order to pile up material wealth.

To build 14 churches required a great deal of money but the Italians supplied it. In this connec-



HON. BENJAMIN CIANCIARULO
Rappresentante Del
14th Assembly District

erty, namely, St. Ann's, in the northern section of Providence, represents an outlay of approximately a half million dollars.

The building of this church with its parochial school and rectory is one of the outstanding accomplishments of the Italians in Providence. A day nursery is operated by this church organization and more than 1000 children are cared for by the Sisters of Mercy.

Another Italian parochial school is conducted in the Federal Hill section of the city and plans are now under way to build three additional schools.

The late Woodrow Wilson, in one of his speeches to new citizens, emphasized the value of religious training and made it plain that America need not fear for the immigrant who adheres to the ideals and religious precepts of his fathers. Although Rhode Island Italians meet the high standards set by the illustrious Woodrow Wilson, they are making more rapid progress in citizenship than the average American is aware of.

Naturalization Work

TO come in the eighties and nineties sensed the importance of citizenship and gained such handsome rewards, socially and economically, that they voluntarily became boosters for the naturalization courts. For years the work of escorting newcomers to the naturalization courts was conducted in a "go as you please style" and usually by selfish and ignorant politicians, but a few years ago there appeared in the life of the Rhode Island colonies a new force and one that dedicated itself to real service.

This force for good is none other than the Sons of Italy, a national organization that embraces in its membership nearly all the Italian societies. For those who do not understand the makeup or purposes of the Sons of Italy, it is well to state that it is similar in character to our own National Congress, because it not only represents all the men of Italian blood in America, but guards their interests as zealously as the most painstaking Congress guards the interest of every American.

Briefly, it is the purpose of this organization to



DOTT. VITO L. RAIA

fuse men of Italian blood into one compact brotherhood and through this unit develop unity of thought and action. Its best and greatest work is that of Americanization and in this connection it is not extravagant to say that the Sons of Italy in Rhode Island has accomplished more in this field than all the other organizations doing this sort of work.

What has this Americanization campaign accomplished?

Again it is necessary to resort to figures but in the figures the story is told. Approximately 17,000 men of Italian blood today enjoy the full rights of citizenship in this State. This is a big block of votes but officials of the Sons of Italy say that it will be augmented by many more thousands in the next five years. What is the effect of this work and how does it enable the Italians to become real worthwhile citizens?

The Sons of Italy

LET us permit S. Giannotti, who is connected with one of the banking institutions of Providence tell the story.

"The Sons of Italy," says Giannotti, "is transforming the men of Italy into first class Americans, but during this process the Italian does not lose his love for the old country. The organization tells the newcomer that it is necessary for him to learn the English language and after he has determined to make this country his permanent home he is told that to reap the full benefits of America it is essential to become a full fledged citizen. The Italian is told what citizenship means. Briefly, the Italian is informed that citizenship carries responsibilities and that to enjoy its benefits he must be willing to fight for the land of his adoption and place its interests before those of his beloved Italy. Italians love Italy and they would be unworthy to become American citizens if they failed to retain an affection for the land of their ancestors, but they love America and why not? America is their land of hope and having tasted the social and economic handicaps of Italy they are in a position to appreciate America much better than those born in this country.

"Personally, I feel that the men who come to this country in the steerage love America much more



PROF. GAETANO CAVICCHIA

than those who were born here because the latter know nothing of the hardships encountered in the Old World and consequently do not appreciate the wonderful freedom and advantages of their country.

"The Irishman loves Ireland; the German loves his homeland and in fact all of our various racial groups maintain a warm spot in their hearts for the old lands across the sea, but can we question their love and loyalty to America because of that? Fair-minded men who have studied the problem say that instead of tainting their Americanism, this love for the old lands actually enhances their love for America.

100 Per Cent. American

"THE Sons of Italy is 100 per cent. American and is engrossed in the work of building 100 per cent. Americans out of the material that comes here from Italy. The organization is proud of its work and when Rhode Island knows the real truth concerning our work the people of the State, irrespective of racial strains, will join in the pride we hold for our work in Americanization."

Reviving Agriculture

SENSING the real greatness of Rhode Island and visioning its future with an ability and faith much greater than that exhibited by the scions of the State's old families, the men and women of Italian blood are making splendid strides in the development of farm lands and in various industries.

Success in farming really depends on a farmer's ability to market his produce advantageously, hence farming has become recognized as a business.

That Italians are making a success of farming in Rhode Island is now recognized, and



HON. GIUSSEPPE A. MERCURIO

that they ultimately will become the dominant factor in the State's agricultural field is virtually certain. Just what value can be placed on farm and garden properties owned by Italians in this State is difficult to estimate, but town and State tax officials assert that it runs into big figures and that it is increasing every year.

At least 80 per cent. of the State's Italian population is country bred so it is easy to understand how they are able to make a success of farming in this country. The Italian has been wedded to the soil for centuries and is much happier in the fields than elsewhere. During the early days of immigration he was forced to do the manual labor for his adopted land but as he saved and became more deeply rooted to this country he turned back to the occupation of his youth.

Visit Cranston, Thornton, Johnston, Bristol, Barrington and other towns where the Italians have established colonies and see for yourself what these industrious men have accomplished. Their gardens are among the best in the State and yield crops that represent a vast amount of money.

You probably will marvel at their skill and industry, for in a majority of cases you will find that the Italians are raising corn, grapes, peaches, apples and other fruits and vegetables on land that your fathers and grandfathers refused to cultivate. Converting these rock and weed patches into fine gardens has added some good taxables to the State's source of income and proves that the Italians are an extremely industrious people and that they have an abiding faith in Rhode Island.

Strong Investors

EVEN when the State was being flooded by propaganda which pictured the decadence of the State's textile industry and the unproductiveness of its soil, the Italians, exhibiting good sense, discarded the vicious propaganda and continued to invest their savings in farm lands and business.

They appreciated that the propaganda merely ex-



AVV. LOUIS W. CAPPELLI

pressed the selfishness of a small group of dominant bankers and mill men that wished to frighten the good citizens of the State and consequently make it easy for this group to retard legislative progress. But the propaganda failed. It was so silly and amateurish that nobody possessing average common sense could believe it. Being endowed with an abundance of common sense the Italians turned away from the propagandists and continued to express their faith and confidence in Rhode Island by investing their money.

Rhode Island, because of its geographic position and splendid climate, is destined for a great future and despite the disloyal propaganda of those who wish to keep it in political darkness will continue to grow and prosper.

Italians have contributed a great deal to the State's growth during the last 20 years and will continue to add to its wealth.

In Many Lines

INVESTIGATION discloses that they have entered many lines of industry and business and that they have kept the rapid pace set by the men of Yankee blood and those from other racial strains. A big and interesting volume could be written concerning the progress of Italian business men and manufacturers, but because of the lack of space only a few can be mentioned in this article.

One of the shining lights is Joseph Caydon of Woonsocket. This man came from Italy in 1893. For capital he had a loyal and frugal wife and three children. Coupled with these assets he possessed ambition and a capacity for hard work. Today he is a mill owner in Woonsocket and one of the richest men in Rhode Island.

Caydon had faith in Rhode Island and succeeded. His faith compared favorably with that exhibited by our own forbears who founded New England and gave it the position of honor in the fields of ocean commerce, agriculture and industry.

All Rhode Island and in fact New England requires a return of the fighting spirit that actuated the founders. At this time when we find so many men of genuine Yankee blood broadcasting the libel that the State's industries are decaying and that we can-



DOTT. LUIGI MAIELLO

not compete with the newer states of the West and the cotton producing States of the South, it is most encouraging to discover that men of Italian blood are actually engaged in the work of upbuilding the section.

Many Made Good

TAKE the case of Vito N. Famiglietti. When he landed in Providence less than 40 years ago he had less than \$2 in his pockets. He went to work and through his own industry and business sagacity has amassed a fortune in the contracting and real estate business. He has been honored politically and is today regarded as one of the leading citizens of Providence.

Frank McKendall, engaged in the lumber business, is another man of Italian blood who amassed a fortune. Luigi Cipolla, Nicola Calderone, Antonio Cappelli and hundreds of others could be cited if space would permit. These men, every one, were extremely poor when they arrived in Rhode Island. Most of them even lacked the common rudiments of an education so essential in these days of sharp competition, but they did possess an abundant confidence in their own abilities and an abundant confidence in the future of Rhode Island. In business they have been successful and each year witnesses an expansion in every field they have entered. Michele Paliano, importer of Italian groceries; G. D. DellRossi, macaroni manufacturer; Buonaccorsi Brothers, tobacco dealers and cigar manufacturers, and Alberto A. Pace, importer, are a few others in the long list of notables.

The Providence Granite Company, one of the largest in the city, is owned by C. Triangolo, and a dozen other granite concerns in the State are owned by Italians. It is said that there are more than 100 Italian bakers in Rhode Island and that their business runs into the hundreds of thousands each year.

In Jewelry Trade

WHEN the Italians arrived in Providence they found that the jewelry business was a flourishing industry and today many of that race are engaged in it. Among the more notable are V. Sorrentino, G. Morvillo, R. Castiglioni, G.

Tertelani and S. Chiappinelli. The products of these men are sent to every section of the country and help swell the business profits of the city and State.



HON. JOHN BARONE
Councilman of the Third Ward

Enter Professions

TO prove that men and women of Italian blood are making rapid headway in the cultural life of Rhode Island, the friends of this hardy and honest race point to the long list of Italian doctors, dentists and lawyers.

Each year sees new additions to the list, for as the number of Italian college graduates increase there is a corresponding increase in the number of professional men.

In Rhode Island there are more than 30 physicians of Italian ancestry, and in fact many of them were born in Italy and came to this State in the steerage. Many are on the medical and surgical staffs of our big hospitals and their co-workers, those who boast of Anglo-Saxon blood and American ancestry, pay them handsome tribute.

In the legal profession several men of Italian blood have earned high places, and one has attained the Superior Court bench. Judge Antonio Capotosto was elevated to the bench two years ago.

Luigi De Pasquale is an Assistant Attorney General of the State and is recognized as one of the ablest criminal lawyers in Rhode Island. Michael Addeo, Frank Cambio, Frank Rivelli, Louis Cappelli and Judge Turano are other lawyers of Italian blood who have worked their way up the ladder of success.

It is generally conceded that a race does not begin to make progress until its members enter the professions. After going over the long list of doctors, lawyers, dentists, artists and musicians in this State, can anybody question the assertion that Italians are making progress?

So far as physicians are concerned, there are so many that they cannot be listed in this article, for it would be extremely unfair to give prominence to a few and fail to mention the younger men who are doing yeoman service in the small communities outside Providence. Naturally, the prominent men in this profession are in Providence, and a majority can be found on Federal Hill, but a considerable number, like their lawyer brothers, are specialists and number among their patients men and women of every race.

There are a score of dentists ranking high in their profession and doing exceedingly well.

It must be remembered that the professional men, with the exception of a mere handful, came from the ranks and in a majority of cases earned their way through college. For a great many, the road was hard and thorny, so their accomplishments, because of these obstacles, become more noteworthy.

Ask the average Italian how his race is getting along, and he immediately points to a doctor or lawyer friend says very proudly that "Mr So and So came up from the bottom and is today one of the State's leading citizens."

Spread American Ideals

What is the attitude of these professional men toward America and what are these men doing to spread American ideals and principles? The answer is simple—every man in the various professional groups is doing all that he can to further the work of Americanization, and not a man in any of these groups places the interests of Italy ahead of the United States.

You may differ with them politically, but you probably differ with many old line Yankees, so you cannot become very angry if your Italian doctor or lawyer friend is opposed to your political philosophy.

But when you discuss America with one of these men you learn, and very quickly, too, that the Italian is just as deeply concerned as yourself.

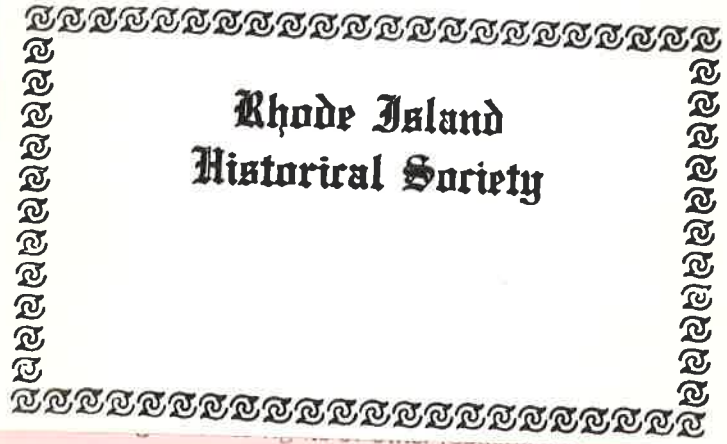
In closing it is worth noting that the Italians are going to continue their fight against the Johnson Immigration bill and in this manner: The Johnson bill, according to Italians, is a direct slap at the Italian race and actually an indictment against their character. They say that the sponsors of that bill claim that immigrants from Italy were of a low order of mentality and not fitted to enter the life of America. To counteract these arguments, the Italians are determined to make such progress in the next few years that they can force the repeal of the law. To do that they will wage an intensive Americanization campaign and through this medium teach the English language to every adult Italian in the country.

"We are going to prove," says a prominent Italian lawyer of Providence, "that our race is second to none in the world and that we make genuine and high-class Americans. Our race has been maligned and abused, but in another five years we will be in a position to meet our detractors and prove that Italian blood is entitled to the same consideration at our ports of entry as that of other European races."

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