

In This Issue: Saldi, Lorenzo Da Ponte, Eric Badaracco, and John Day's Travels in Italy!

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# L'Osservatore Lancastriano

*Salve a tutti,*

January is the heart of winter in Italy, where the first month of the year is one of the coldest with some rainy days and, in many parts of Italy, at least a dusting of snow, which is somewhat similar to our Lancaster weather.

The first week of the month is still part of the Christmas festive period, and January 1<sup>st</sup> is a national holiday. Most attractions, including the Vatican, the Colosseum and the Uffizi Gallery, are closed on this day. January 6<sup>th</sup> celebrates the Epiphany, also a national holiday, which marks the end of the Christmas festivities (it is the last day for most Christmas markets).

The Tuscan countryside gets chilly in January and you can also get snow at higher altitudes, so this is a good time to visit many of Florence's famous museums and, if you get here the weeks with the sales (saldi), it can be a shoppers' paradise.

It is also a wonderful time to sample Tuscan food, which is warming, filling, and perfect with a glass of local vino rosso.

Not many of us will be traveling to Italy this month, but we can make some wonderful Italian food at home and raise a glass of red to our Italian heritage. Viva Italia!

Salute e Buon Anno! - *Rudy DeLaurentis*

**Welcome new members:  
Tony and Valerie Boffa  
Angelo J. Iafrate**

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Please find and share us on Facebook. We need your comments, likes, helpful sharing of recipes and all things Italian. Grazie mille.



## **Saldi – Winter Sales**

If you love to shop, January is a great time to be in Italy. The much-anticipated winter sales (saldi) usually begin around the time of the Epiphany/Befana (January 5 or 6) and last until the end of February — or until shoppers and shop owners have cleared out last season's goods.

During the first week of sales, items will be immediately discounted from between 30 to 50 percent off the original price, with discounts getting deeper with each passing week so as to move the old merchandise and get ready for the new. Just about every place with something to sell, from small boutiques to designer outlets, gets in on the saldi bandwagon in order to capture shoppers' attention.

We found this article online at [www.italofile.com](http://www.italofile.com) which is another great site to explore interesting information about Italy's customs and traditions...as well as the best times to shop.

<https://www.italofile.com/designer-outlets-in-italy/>

**Lorenzo Da Ponte by Mary Cae Williams**

One of the most enjoyable aspects of searching for interesting Italians to bring to our readers' attention is the discoveries we make along the way. Lorenzo da Ponte is certainly one of those.

Lorenzo was born on 10 March 1749, to a Jewish family in Ceneda, in the Republic of Venice. Emanuele Conegliano was the name he was given by his parents. In 1764, his father, Geronimo Conegliano, by then a widower, decided to convert to Roman Catholicism in order to marry a Catholic woman. He and his three sons converted. As was the custom of the day, Emanuele took the name of Lorenzo Da Ponte, given to him by the Bishop of Ceneda, who baptized him. It was thanks to this same bishop that Lorenzo and his two brothers were able to study at the Ceneda seminary.

Later, Lorenzo moved to the seminary at Portogruaro where he took Minor Orders in 1770 and became Professor of Literature. He was ordained a priest in 1773. It was during this time in his life that he began writing poetry in Italian and Latin. In 1773, Lorenzo also moved to Venice where he worked as a teacher of Latin, Italian and French.

Despite being a priest, Lorenzo did not lead a chaste life. While he was the priest at the church of San Luca, in fact, he took a mistress, with whom he had two children. It was for this fact among other questionable choices he had made, that Lorenzo was tried and found guilty of "public concubinage" and "abduction of a respectable woman." His sentence was banishment from Venice for fifteen years.

Lorenzo moved to Gorizia, then part of Austria, where he made his living as a writer. He became involved with Salieri, who helped him obtain the post of librettist to the Italian Theatre in Vienna. As court librettist he

worked with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and wrote the libretti (little books in Italian) for *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*. These are three of Mozart's most famous operas.

When the Austrian Emperor Joseph II died, Da Ponte lost his patron. In the following years, Lorenzo moved to Prague and London accompanied by his companion, Nancy Grahl. He and Nancy Grahl had four children together. He wrote libretti at the King's Theatre in London, but was forced to flee in 1805 because of his debt and bankruptcy. He and Nancy moved with their children to the United States.

At first they settled in New York, but then lived in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. It was there that he briefly ran a grocery store and gave private Italian lessons. He then returned to New York where he opened a bookstore. He made friends with Clement Clarke Moore, who is most famous for his poem "The Night Before Christmas." Moore helped Lorenzo to gain an appointment as the first professor of Italian literature at Columbia College. He was the first Roman Catholic priest to be appointed to the faculty and also the first to have been born Jewish.

In New York, Lorenzo introduced opera and produced a performance of *Don Giovanni* (1825.) He also introduced the music of Gioachino Rossini to American audiences in a concert tour undertaken with his niece Giulia Da Ponte.

In 1828, Lorenzo Da Ponte became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. He founded the first opera house in the United States, The New York Opera Company, which lasted only two seasons. Lorenzo's lack of business skill forced him to sell the theater to pay the company's debts. However, the New York Opera Company was the predecessor of the New York Academy of Music and the New York Metropolitan Opera.

Lorenzo Da Ponte died in 1838 in New York. His funeral ceremony was held at old St. Patrick's Cathedral and attracted an enormous number of mourners.

Most of this information was taken from the biographical sketch found on the website of the Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library. "Its role is to make available a series of one hundred works by Italian authors who have made significant literary, philosophical, juridical, and historical contributions to the world of international culture." For more information about the work of this organization check out their website at <http://www.dapontelibrary.com/about.html>.

### Sharing our Italian-American Culture by *Mary Cae Williams*

In late summer, Rosemary LaFata, our Board President, was approached by a representative of Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) to see if LICS could provide a speaker to present information about Italian American Culture to a group of their students. As part of their initiative to honor diversity, the college was looking for presenters from different cultural backgrounds. We were fortunate to have maintained a connection with former LICS member, Eric Badaracco, who graciously agreed to undertake this task.

Eric Badaracco is a third/fourth generation Italian American with roots in Liguria and Calabria. Growing up in Northern New Jersey, Eric found himself with a foot in two worlds: the Italian American world of his grandparents and the high paced, highly individualistic world of postmodern America. In college, Eric dedicated his studies to learning about his Italian heritage, focusing on the Italian language and its dialects, the history of Italy, and the history of Italians in America. He also loves to cook Italian food and cherishes traditional recipes and believes in respecting the authenticity of such dishes. Eric has been to Italy many times both to visit relatives and as a tourist, having also led a food and wine tour of Tuscany in 2016. Eric currently teaches History in Pennsylvania. He can be reached at [Eric.Badaracco@yahoo.com](mailto:Eric.Badaracco@yahoo.com).

Early in November, through a Zoom Meeting, Eric presented a wide range of information about both the Italian American Culture and the experiences of Italian immigrants from the 19th century up to current times. Eric covered sociological, historical, cultural, and psychological aspects of the Italian immigrant experience and how it has changed over the past two centuries. Eric discussed with the students the important role the Roman Catholic Church played in the lives of generations of Italian immigrants. He talked about the ways in which Hollywood has portrayed the Italian-American community.

As part of his discussion of film portrayals, he shared a clip from a movie (*Nuovomondo*)\* about a Sicilian family's immigration to America. In this story, the patriarch of the family has a vision of America, where rivers of milk flow freely. Eric talked about the harsh and pre-modern lives that many of the 19th and early 20th Century immigrants were living in Italy. Their dream of America was one of a land of almost mythic opportunity. Too often, as we all know, the reality was very disappointing.



The harsh and often unwelcoming reality and the struggles that it forced on newly immigrated Italians, promoted the importance of forming small communities within the cities to which they moved. Thus, throughout the late 19th and most of the 20th Centuries, many American cities hosted thriving Little Italys where Italian-Americans could provide mutual support and maintain customs from their land of origin.

During the latter half of the 20th Century and into the current century, many families moved away from these enclaves into the suburbs. Italian-Americans of the second, third, and fourth generations increasingly married people from other cultural backgrounds. Eric explained to the students that these families have had a very different experience from that of Italians who immigrated more recently.

Eric talked about the traditional importance of the patriarch in Italian families. He also explained to the students that this importance was balanced by the equally powerful influence of the matriarch. He noted that these two roles, acting together, gave early immigrant families strength, security, and motivation to not only survive but to succeed in their new country.

Eric noted that with changing times it is uncertain what the future of Italian-American culture will look like. He mentioned that this question is not unique to the Italian-American community, but is faced by all immigrant groups in our changing world. America prides itself on being the great melting pot and that leaves us with many questions about what it will look like for our own traditions as we move forward.

\*The English title of this movie is **The Golden Door** and is available for rent from Amazon.

## Upcoming Events

**January 23** –**James J. Lombardo** will discuss the three books he has written about the history and experiences of Italian-Americans in Lancaster County. In the community room of The Oaks.

**February** (date TBA) – **Tim Austin Liddell** will present information about work he was involved in at Pompeii in recent years. In the community room of The Oaks.

**March** (date and location TBA) – Members Luncheon Meeting to elect new officers and board members.

## Membership Renewal Reminder

Dear Members,

The annual membership dues invoices will be mailed by the end of February for the fiscal year 3-1-2022 to 2-28-2023, and dues will remain at \$40.

Thank you in advance for your continued support.

My warmest wishes to all of you for a prosperous and healthy 2022.

J.D. Roda, *Treasurer*

## John Day's Travels in Italy - December 14, 2021

Hello Fellow Travelers,

We arrived at the Philly airport very early, due to our ride needing to be home at a certain time, and we were very glad for that. Checking in, and getting through security was not bad at all, . . . BUT Italy requires a visitor to fill out an "EU-PLF" - Passenger Locator Form. This took us over an hour, while we waited for our plane, which was a half hour late. We did not make up the time while flying to Frankfurt, but that wouldn't have made any difference. It took us over 2 hours to get through the Passport/Covid check. People with an EU passport flew through with automatic face recognition. We had to be checked to make sure we had our vaccinations and negative tests. "Everything that happens is part of the adventure."

On the long flight from Philly, my seatmate was a student from Greece, finishing his last semester at Drexel. We hit it off, and now I have someone who will help me navigate around Greece, starting in the second largest city, Thessaloniki. He says he wants a job in the US, working in the area of financial research.

The flight from Frankfurt to Milan was less than half full, so my sister and I each had 3 seats to ourselves.

Too bad it was so short. We found our agriturismo\* without any trouble - God bless the GPS setup - though we were much later than planned. Claudia and her brother, Francesco, are wonderful. She gave us a bottle of wine and an antipasto platter without charge - very unusual. We had signed up for bed & breakfast only. There's a restaurant here that's only open for dinner from 7:00 to 10:00 pm. She accommodated us at 5:00. This place is definitely a keeper.

Yesterday and today we spent visiting our cousins here. My Italian is holding up better than I expected. We ate dinner with one family last night, and had lunch with another one this noon. We have no particular schedule, except for the birthday celebration for soon-to-be 96-year-old Franco, our mom's first cousin, this Saturday. Yesterday we drove around Lago d'Iseo (one scary section with blind corners), and today we went to Verona to the Christmas Market. Tomorrow is another day, and we don't have anything planned as of now.

Ciao per ora (Bye for now), John

\* The word agriturismo is a blend of the Italian words for agriculture and tourism. ... Agriturismi (plural of agriturismo) are working farms that are set up to receive guests for meals and/or overnight stays.



(Above: **At the Stove** by Italian Artist Odoardo Borrani)

Odoardo Borrani (1832-1905) was an important member of the Macchiaioli, a mid-nineteenth century artistic movement in Italy and cultural counterpart to the political and social campaign toward Italian reunification (Il Risorgimento) and the cessation of foreign rule. For the most part, the Macchiaioli were democratic intellectuals and artists in the late 1850s who opposed the authoritarian training at the Florentine Academy. They drew inspiration from their contemporary world, creating plein-air sketches of the Tuscan countryside and the humble existence of its inhabitants. Their paintings are characterized by a distinctive treatment of light and shadow and a democratic approach to composition and form.

The following letter from LICS member Kathi Spencer was printed in the LNP *Lancaster Newspaper*:

**Wrong word in photo caption**

I was delighted to read that the National Christmas Center was reopening (“Sneak peek,” Nov. 24 LNP). My curiosity spiked, however, when I read the caption for the photo in the lower left corner of the story, which stated that a New Jersey couple had delivered an “18th-century Neapolitan precipice that took 10 years to build.”

Why in the world would these folks be delivering an 18th-century Neapolitan cliff? Surely, what the caption writer meant was that they delivered “a replica of an 18th-century Neapolitan presepe that took 10 years to build.” Presepe is the Italian word for “manger” or “crèche” and is commonly used to describe Christmas Nativity scenes.

Just wanted to set the record straight.

Kathleen Moretto Spencer West Lampeter Township



**John Day’s Travels in Italy - December 16, 2021**

Hello Fellow Travelers,

On Wednesday, Betty [his sister] and I took a tour around Lago di Garda. Our grandfather, Frank Sega, grew up in Affi, a small town east of the lake with a mountain in between. Our Italian cousin, Franco Sega (named after Grandpa), had shown us the house years before. By some miraculous divine intervention & my superb memory (chuckle), we found it again. The sign on the way in clearly prohibited all cars but those in residence, which of course I ignored. It didn’t say “John, you can’t come in.” Then we made a giro (tour) counter-clockwise around the lake.

Lago di Garda is not as well-known as her two sisters - Lago di Como & Lago Maggiore. Many famous people have homes on the former - George Clooney, Madonna, Sylvester Stallone, Gianni Versace, to name a few. It is also the location for a scene from a Star Wars movie. The latter goes into Switzerland, and is quite large. A ferry ride takes you between the two countries. As a result, Garda is less touristy, but it is very beautiful.

Mountains line both the long east and west shores. On the west side, the road goes through a number of tunnels. But the artistic Italians made it so you can see the lake through a myriad of columnar openings. Seeing the homes on the sides of the mountains way up above the lake, is amazing. We decided not to try to maneuver the narrow roads leading up to any of them. We stuck with the roadway encircling the lake.

We don’t have a “green pass”, which means we cannot eat inside at any restaurant, so we bought some cheese, bread, bananas, and drink at an Aldi for our noonday meal. That evening we had supper (more like “dinner”) at our agriturismo. Wow! What a feast. We told our hostess to bring what she thought was the best on the simple Menu (Antipasto, Primo, Secondo, and Dolce). It was fabulous, but way more than we bargained for. (Tonight we ordered 1 Menu to split between us, but it was still too much. We will try again to downsize.)

Today, after getting up late, we visited a large mall near Rovato called “Le Porte Franche”. This was for some Christmas shopping and to get some grub for future lunches. We really feel like temporary locals right now. Below is a picture of the champagne (“Franciacorta” in Lombardy, Italy) Cascina Corretto makes.



For 20 consecutive days they need to turn each bottle 1/8 turn to get the result of the process into the bottom of the neck. Then on January 15, 2022, the bottles are cut and capped. Quite a lot of work to get the correct result.

Ciao per ora, John

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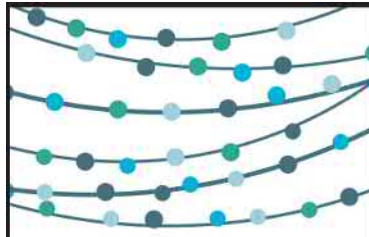


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