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A Christmas Memory
Buon Natale a Tutti!

The Newsletter of the
Lancaster Italian Cultural Society

Volume 23 & Issue 4 December 2021



L'Osservatore Lancastriano



A Christmas Memory from Rome by Nella Seward

Christmas had passed. Memories lingered still in my 9-year-old mind, full of sweet Christmas pastries and traditional meals made of so much fish on Christmas Eve and the pasta, the rabbit, the pork, all the fantastic vegetables, fruits, bread, cakes and cookies. All had been wonderful, even playing the traditional Tombola, 7 1/2, Scopa, and Briscola. Then all repeated themselves, one week later, for New Year's Eve and Day. Again, mom and the older siblings were making the holiday merry and wonderful.

The Christmas tree was still gleaming, heavy-laden with lots of decorations and so many wrapped fruits hanging there for the taking. Tangerines, chestnuts, walnuts and chocolate candies were giving all permission to reach out and eat. Under the tree, there were panettoni, torroni, marzipane, and some bottles of wine or liquor, all gifts given by families or friends for the celebration of the New Year.

What a time we had! And, every year all was expected with anticipation. There were no Christmas gifts of any other kind under the tree. In Italy, people just exchanged visits and brought some traditional food to celebrate this blessed time of year.

Children in Italy received gifts from La Befana on January 6, when the Church celebrates the Epiphany

(Epifania.) It is the day when the Three Magi arrived to see Jesus in Bethlehem and brought Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

My sister, Franca, 7 years old, and I were the youngest of seven children. We had a fantastic holiday time, but we knew that that year La Befana would not bring toys to us, not because we had been "bad" but because our parents were not doing so well financially. No words were spoken, we knew only that this would be a La Befana without gifts, perhaps, now and in the future.

I went to bed on that night of the 5th of January, but I had difficulty going to sleep. There was a continuous tapping noise coming from the hallway of our apartment. For a while, I did not know what it was, but it continued for hours, all night. Then, I recognized that it was the sewing machine being used by somebody. Not wanting to leave my warm bed, I endured the noise until, very early in the morning, it subsided.

When Franca and I got up, we looked at each other. No words were spoken, silence was the seed of acceptance.

We went to the kitchen for breakfast. We passed by the Christmas tree. At its foot, under the twinkling lights, there were our two old dolls, dressed in the most beautiful, new dresses. We had never seen anything so beautiful in our lives.

I am an old woman now, but by the grace of God, that Christmas was the most beautiful, most memorable in my life. My heart still cries for joy, remembering and knowing that my sister, Anna, the oldest of seven children, spent one entire night to make two beautiful dresses for two old dolls for her two youngest, little sisters. Grazie, Anna.

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**President's Message**

Saluti cari amici,

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner with family and friends. Here we are with Christmas soon to be and unfortunately no LICS Christmas party this year, but we have a Chairperson working on next year's party.

We are working on bringing back our indoor activities, e.g., social gatherings, wine tastings, lunch meetings with speakers, duckpin bowling, Winter Picnic/Elections meeting, etc. At time of printing this newsletter, we did not have confirmed dates. You'll notice the "2021 Italian-American Service Award" form is included, please send in your nomination, before December 20<sup>th</sup>.

We are currently looking to fill LICS Board positions for Secretary and possibly 2 Board members. If you or someone you know would like to commit to a two-year term, please let me or Mary Cae Williams know.

Also, please open and read the January Eblast & bollettino for details of the upcoming events.

A reminder that our FaceBook page is up and running, so please check it out. We need your likes, comments and posts to increase member awareness and participation in LICS. Please share recipes, recommendations and anything Italian!

Auguro a tutti un benedetto e magnifico Natale,

Rosemary LaFata



Members, if you have family news, births, deaths, marriage announcements and honors or awards that you would like to share with the membership, please email them to [licsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:licsnewsletter@gmail.com). Or call Pat Valenzo at 717-569-9798.

**LICS Member News**

**Welcome new members:**

Stella Ida Seger & Marie Haney



Get well wishes to Betty Ferruzza

Congratulations to Tony & Jayne Grochowski on their 65th wedding anniversary

Condolences to Linda Hilton, on the passing of her husband, Paul.

**Bollettino/Newsletter Committee:**

Mary Cae Williams

Marian Caroselli

John Day, Nella Seward

Rudy DeLaurentis, editor

**LICSNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM**

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**Phone: 717-250-0080**

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**Sandra Gray Interview by Mary Cae Williams**

We welcome Sandra Edwards Gray as a sponsor on behalf of Pyfer Reese Straub Gray & Farhat PC, a local law firm that has been practicing in this area since 1976. In a recent interview, Sandra shared that on their first day of business the partners sat around the phone waiting for the first call. Everyone was excited when the phone rang, but it turned out to be a wrong number. With numerous anecdotes and stories about a wide range of subjects, Sandra turned the interview into a comfortable chat. Her welcoming and friendly approach to a stranger made it easy to see how supportive she might be if that stranger were seeking legal advice.

When asked why she chose to sponsor the Lancaster Italian Cultural Society's newsletter and bollettino, Sandra talked about giving back to the community. She spoke about the programs, the lectures, the spaghetti dinner, and the many events she has enjoyed over the years as a member of LICS. Sandy, as most people call her, does not actually have any Italian heritage. She joins the millions of Americans who have visited Italy and fallen in love.

Sandy and her partner, Bruce Shapiro, visited Italy for the first time in 2002. They spent two weeks in Sicily. They stayed in an apartment in Tropolis and simply settled into life Italian-style. Every morning they were awakened by the bells of a nearby church playing Ave Maria. They rented a car, but chose to do most of their driving during the afternoon hours, the traditional *riposo*, when the traffic was not so heavy. Driving in Italy proved to be an adventure all its own. While they were staying in Tropolis, Sandy and Bruce joined a beach club so that they could spend time on the beach almost every day.

Although neither of them spoke Italian, they managed to communicate successfully with people who did not speak English...all were trying to make it work and it did. Sandy said that the local Laundromat did not look appealing, so they decided to take their clothes to a laundry business. The owner did not speak English, but she called a relative in Brooklyn (yes, New York City) who helped with the interpreting. Sandy said, "When I got my laundry back, not only was it clean and neatly folded, but it were wrapped as if it was a gift from Neiman-Marcus. That is the Italian way, beauty in even the smallest tasks.

Sandy shared how much she appreciates articles in the newsletter and bollettino- just another way in which she made the interview so rewarding. She enjoys the history and the stories from members and, especially, the recipes. She confessed to being a serious recipe

collector. In fact, she believes that she will never be able to actually make all the recipes she has collected over the years.

We talked a bit about Sandy's practice, too. They are what is called a general practice. Much of their practice is in family law, but they are qualified to represent clients in many other ways. Sandy mentioned with pride that the attorneys are all excellent and that they are expanding the practice. She was proud of the new, younger lawyers coming into the firm, too. Currently, the practice has offices in Ephrata, York, and Willow Street as well as on North Lime Street in Lancaster City. It was not surprising to hear Sandy say, "We try to serve clients in ways to make their lives better." They represent people in all walks of life and from all levels of income.

Sandy seemed regretful when she talked about how difficult it can be to deal with legal matters. She indicated that the system is complicated and that it can be very hard for people to afford the experience and quality of representation they need to help them. Her genuine, calm, and open manner left the impression that anyone would be in good hands if she were representing them.

Again, thanks to Sandra Edwards Gray and Pyfer Reese Straub Gray & Farhat PC for sponsoring the Lancaster Italian Cultural Society newsletter and bollettino. It is a pleasure to share membership in this organization with people like Sandy.

**Colonel Luigi Palma di Cesnola by Marian Caroselli**

Our continuing series on Italians and Italian Americans involved in the US Civil War turns its attention to Cavaliere Emmanuele Pietro Paolo Maria Luigi Palma di Cesnola (1832-1904). He was an Italian-American soldier, diplomat and amateur archaeologist, born in Rivarolo Canavese, near Turin. He led an amazing life, fighting wars on three continents, marrying an American blue blood and conducting groundbreaking archaeological digs in Cyprus. He was born into a military family of lesser nobility in the Kingdom of Piedmont in 1832, the second son of a count and countess. Given the laws of primogeniture, which dictate the first son inherits the title, he had to make his own way in the world. After being kicked out of a Jesuit elementary school, he went to military school. As rebellion swept through Europe in 1848, young Luigi joined the fight to free Northern Italy from the shackles of Austro-Hungarian rule. He fought with distinction, receiving the silver medal for bravery and was promoted to under-lieutenant at the age of 16.

After the war and his commissioning as an officer, Cesnola attended Piedmontese military academies, including the cavalry school at Pinerolo, and for several years, enjoyed the life of a young, handsome cavalry officer. Strangely, he resigned his commission and became an aide to several Italians fighting alongside the British in the Crimean War.

After peace was declared in Crimea, Cesnola traveled to New York City around 1858 with a flute and not much more. He tried to make a living by teaching French and Italian and doing translations, but he barely scraped by. In 1860, he took on a new pupil, Mary Jennings Reid, a member of the American aristocracy, who came from a family with a strong military history. They married in 1861 to the chagrin of Mary's friends and family, who believed she was marrying beneath her station.

The family was in need of money and Mary came up with the idea of using Luigi's vast military knowledge and experience to start a school to train aspiring officers. With Cesnola's pedigree, the school quickly flourished and ended up training 700 officers for the Union war effort.

Cesnola was soon appointed colonel of the 4th New York Volunteer Cavalry and started recruiting at his and Mary's expense. In the early part of the war, the Union troops were outmatched and repeatedly defeated. Cesnola brought an aggressive and attacking approach to fighting.



Soon, Cesnola's abilities were noticed. He was given command over five regiments (5,000 troops) under General Carl Schurz. Cesnola was involved in numerous clashes in Virginia with units under the command of Lee's brilliant cavalry commander Jeb Stuart. Through live action and constant drilling,

Cesnola's troops were becoming increasingly professional.

He was passed over for brigade commands in favor of his American-born counterparts, even though he had more experience and seniority in rank. As such, he was back in the saddle when his division fought the first engagement in which the Union cavalry claimed victory at Kelly's Ford in March 1863. It was Cesnola's own 4th that made that successful charge.

Cesnola's unit was then involved with General Stoneman's first major Union cavalry raid. Taking place over four days behind enemy lines, it was designed to influence Lee's movements before Chancellorsville. Given his recent success, Cesnola was placed in command of a brigade for what would be the largest predominantly cavalry battle of the Civil War, involving more than 20,000 men. It took place at Brandy Station, Virginia, in June 1863. His brigade charged two Confederate cavalry regiments of about 600 men at Hansbrough's Ridge, forcing them to fall back. Always leading from the front, he was said to have crossed sabers with several rebel officers in this engagement.

His next engagement, the Battle of Aldie, about 40 miles west of Washington, D.C., was described as a severe, savage fight between 4,000 men in 94-degree weather. Aldie was important as a junction of two major turnpikes. The Confederate cavalry was moving north as a screen for Lee's army, which was ultimately heading to Gettysburg. Lincoln was quite concerned as to the whereabouts of Lee's troops and ordered his cavalry to learn what they could at all costs.

In, perhaps, a show of nepotism, officers were reshuffled, slighting Cesnola, resulting in an argument with General Gregg. Cesnola was placed under house arrest, with his sword and pistol taken away from him. His beloved 4th went into battle without him and was pushed back. Seeing his unit routed, he jumped on a horse and, with his unit's acclamation, led them in a second charge that was successful.

Another general, witnessing this amazing feat, went over Gregg's head and had Cesnola released from arrest just as another charge was called for. Seeing Cesnola had no weapon, the general offered him his own sword and said "bring it back with some rebel blood." Cesnola turned apparent defeat into a glorious victory. Unfortunately, the third charge (some say fifth) resulted in Cesnola

## 2021 Italian-American Service Award



### Title of Award:

- Italian-American of Lancaster Service Award

### Timeline:

- Applications may be downloaded year round from the LICS Website.
- Nominations are received by committee chair, Peter Costanzo at: **pcostanzo@janney.com, or mailed to: 503 Wellesley Court, Lititz, PA 17543**, through December 20<sup>th</sup> this year.
- December 20<sup>th</sup> is the firm postmark deadline if at least one application is received.
- In the event that no applications are received, committee members will generate a pool of applications.
- Judges will review all nominations in November and make final decision.
- Award will be generated in December.
- Award will be announced/presented in January 2022.

### Judges:

- Three board members and two at large LICS members will serve two-year terms.
- Initially the five member committee will be asked to serve a minimum of two years.
- Nominating committee volunteers will be taken at the spring LICS meeting.
- Selection will be by simple majority of committee members.

### Criteria:

- Nominee may be an active member of the LICS but can also come from the greater Lancaster community (must reside in the Lancaster area).
- Nominee must be of Italian heritage.
- Nominee may be male or female.
- Nominee may not be nominated for another award (such as the Scholarship)
- Nominee will be most qualified if they have been active on multiple fronts within the Society or Lancaster community.
- Successful nominees will have made a real and substantial contribution to the Society or community through committee work, volunteering at events, recruiting, fund raising, public relations or other such activity.
- Current officers and board members are eligible to be candidates for the award.
- Past winners are not eligible for nominations for three years following the year in which they won.

### Plaque:

- Annual winners will receive a plaque from the LICS and will be granted free attendance at all activities during the year of their award (example, winner is announced in January 2022- eligible to attend all events free for 2022). Honoree's guest will still pay for attendance.

**2021 Italian-American Service Award**

Nomination Form:

Name of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Recommender \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email of Recommender \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Submission of this form \_\_\_\_\_ (not valid for current year if submitted after Dec. 20, 2021.)

Reason for Nomination (see criteria below):

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- Judges (three board and two at large members) will review all nominations in December and make a selection at that time.
- Award will be announced/presented in January 2022.

Criteria:

- Nominee may be an active member of the LICS, but also may come from the greater Lancaster community.
- Must be a resident of the Lancaster area.
- Nominee can be male or female but must be of Italian heritage.
- Nominee will be most qualified if they have been active on multiple fronts within the Society or Lancaster community.
- Successful nominees will have made a real and substantial contribution to the Society or Lancaster community through committee work, volunteering at events, recruiting, fundraising, public relations or other such significant activity.
- Current officers and board members are eligible to be candidates for the award.
- Past winners are not eligible for nominations for three years following the year in which they won.
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not returning with his men. The colonel ended up "laying under his dead horse, a sabre cut three inches long on the crown of his head, a large cut in the palm of his hand and a gunshot wound in the upper part of his left arm," Elizabeth McFadden wrote in "The Glitter and the Gold." Cesnola was captured and sent to the Libby Prisoner of War Camp. In 1897, for his bravery during that battle, Cesnola received our nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, becoming the first Italian American to do so.

Libby Prison in Richmond was the second-most infamous prison in the Confederacy after Andersonville. It housed roughly 1,000 Union officers in cramped and unhealthy conditions. Fortunately, a fellow officer helped nurse Cesnola back to health. Numerous letters to his "dearest Mary" from her "Luigi" still exist. Besides requests for blankets and food, he asks for articles of women's clothing, humorously telling her not to be jealous, as he had no sweetheart. The items were clearly to be used as bribes for the mail censors to let her letters come through to him. Another amusing request was for flute sheet music from Verdi's "Il Trovatore" to entertain the men. Cesnola was held captive from June 1863 to March 1864. His letters imply that other officers with more political connections were freed more rapidly.

After seeing his beloved Mary and his first-born daughter in New York, Cesnola was back in the fight in Virginia. His unit was part of General Sheridan's cavalry, which was working with General Grant to defeat Lee. The 4th New York was in violent battles such as Cold Harbor and Trevilian Station, where Cesnola's brigade was involved in seven assaults and repulsed with heavy losses. (There was another dashing young commander in the Union cavalry division at that time by the name of Custer). In private letters, Cesnola was critical of senior officers for the pointless loss of lives at Trevilian, the steady looting and burning of the homes of Southerners, and the mistreatment of women, which the cavaliere found horrible and attempted to prevent. His unit's service was over in September 1864 after having fought in 47 battles of the great American struggle.

Following the war, Luigi and Mary were basically penniless. Fortunately, through friends in New York, Cesnola was able to secure the consulship of Cyprus. He became an American citizen in August 1865 and, somewhat controversially, began calling himself "general" in Cyprus to impress the Turkish

authorities, who controlled the island. For the most part, he stopped referring to himself as count, which he occasionally did before becoming a U.S. citizen, though as a second son, he was entitled only to cavaliere.

The late 1800s were an era of amazing archaeological finds, such as the discovery that the city of Troy was an actual place, not just a story by Homer. Cesnola threw himself into scouring Cyprus for artifacts. Through several years of excavations and purchases, he was able to amass a significant collection.



One of Cesnola's goals was to prove that Cyprus was the link between Egypt and Greece in antiquity. Such was the significance of his finds that both the Russian and French governments considered purchasing them for their museums. Fortunately for him, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York wanted to flex its muscles versus its European counterparts. As the museum states on its website, "When the Metropolitan Museum opened at its current site in Central Park in 1880, the [Cesnola] collection was the focus of attention, heralded as a great asset to the city of New York, which was then aspiring to become a major cultural as well as business center. The richness and fame of the collection also did much to establish the Museum's reputation as a major repository of classical antiquities and put it on a par with the foremost museums in Europe." To substantiate his efforts, Cesnola published a tome on his work in Cyprus and the artifacts he uncovered. The archaeological field was nascent at this point, and there are criticisms that his excavations and those of other European explorers removed the cultural heritage of countries. Several men who clearly resented Cesnola's success attempted to paint him and some of his findings as frauds but failed in the courts of both law and public opinion.

As part of his negotiations with the museum, Cesnola was named director, and in so doing, secured a place for himself and his wife in New York society. Mary became involved in benevolent activities and helped to found an Italian Orphanage and the Christoforo Colombo Hospital in New York. Luigi served tirelessly as the first director of the museum and was instrumental in the construction of its beautiful building along Central Park. "The

Cesnola Collection remains a wonderful storehouse of ancient art and artifacts, and it is by far the most important and comprehensive collection of Cypriot material in the Western Hemisphere," the museum website states. He worked at the museum until his death in 1904 and received praise for his dedication from the likes of J.P. Morgan and the Vanderbilts.



Ora, é divertente!

**Christmas Eve - Feast of the Seven Fishes**

In Italy, Christmas Eve dinner is traditionally lighter with no meat and a lot of seafood, while the Italian-American meal has evolved into much more of a feast. Bring on the sword fish, tuna, salmon, octopus salad, smelts, calamari, spaghetti with clam sauce and the famous Italian classic—salted cod, known as baccalà. The Feast of the Seven Fishes can also include other meatless dishes, which vary by region. For example, gnocchi recipes and stuffed pasta are a hit in Northern Italy, where Veneto is known for buckwheat spaghetti in a creamy anchovy sauce. No matter where you celebrate, though, the sweet treats are a certainty!

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Sandra Edwards Gray - Attorney  
sgray@pyferreese.com



128 North Lime Street  
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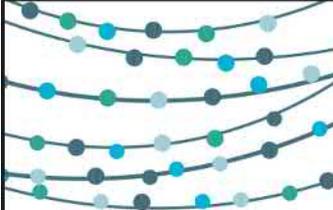
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L'OSSERVATORE LANCASTRIANO December 2021

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**Buon Natale a Tutti!**

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**Please check the LICS Website for updates.**

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