



THE CRACO SOCIETY

THE CRACOTAN PAPER STOCK MEN OF NEW YORK

Immigrants at the turn of the 20th century brought with them skills or learned experiences from their native countries and used them in their new homeland. Some of these capabilities evolved into businesses and sources of income that far exceeded what was possible in their old homeland. Tradesmen in small villages in the old country had limited opportunities but when they arrived in New York City their potential exploded. The same was true for the unskilled laborers whose strength and willingness to work were sought by a growing country.

Immigrant communities were also tightknit and shared opportunities among themselves often excluding or even displacing others for housing and work. The job opportunities, perhaps limited by prejudice or the lack of the English language, created some niches in business that were dominated by immigrant groups. Examples can be seen in the “Irish washer-woman” or the Chinese hand laundry.” Amongst the Italian immigrants there were also synonymous groups like the [Barese Icemen](#) of New York whose story was documented in a film.

The Craco Society, while assisting members researching their family histories in early 20th century US records show many families involved in a business called the “paper stock.” After years of research for members and countless records it is apparent that almost everyone who came from Craco had a family member or knew someone that was involved in this business. This “paper stock” business nurtured many from Craco and was heavily dominated by them through the mid-century.

Today, the paper stock business is more recognizable under the term of “recycling” but during prior times it was known as “dealers in waste paper,” and “paper mill suppliers.”

Exactly how the Crachesi entered this business is unknown but some hints at an answer to the question may come from contemporary sources at the turn of the century.

Jacob Riis author of [How The Other Half Lives](#) observed in the 1880's that, “...there is money to be made in New York's ash-barrel, but it was left to the genius of the “padrone” to develop the full resources of the mine that was to become the exclusive preserve of the Italian immigrant.”

At that time New York City hired gangs of men to trim ash scows before they were taken to sea for off loading. Besides being paid a dollar and a half for the day they could keep whatever they found. This provided them with bones, rags, tin cans, and other waste that formed another source of revenue. [Thomas Edison](#) filmed scenes as he was developing the movie camera. that include ones showing men and boys stuffing paper into burlap bags.

Just before the turn of the century we know the Benedetto family from Craco organized a distribution center for waste paper in Manhattan. No doubt it was one of those group opportunities that allowed Cracotans to work with someone they knew and could trust to treat them fairly. New York City would prove to be an ideal place for this business with its heavy concentration of printing trades and office buildings along with legislation that favored this business.

We can get a sense of the dominance of Cracotans in the industry by comparing information sources from the last century. The 1907 New York City Directory has a business listing for 103 “Paper Stock” companies and among them are 22 names of business owners that have Crachesi roots.

By 1918 [White-Orr's Reference Register](#) listed 79 paper stock businesses in New York City, with 24 of them recognizable as Cracotans.

By 1934 the business directory listing shrunk to 66 listings but 26 were Cracotans.

As the industry contracted over those years the Crachesi expanded their presence; going from 21% of the business owners in 1907 to 39% in 1934. In fact, their dominance in the industry became so well know it was cited in the 2002 book, [“Takedown The Fall of the Last Mafia Empire.”](#)

The influence on Cracotan families was significant. The bulk of their businesses were located in the Lower Manhattan commercial loft areas that were adjacent to the tenement neighborhood they called home. These were family businesses, that sometimes included wives in roles sorting paper into different grades. The sorting of office waste sometime provided surprises and windfalls. Children in paper stock families always had pencils, pens and paper, albeit used. Some workers were more fortunate, finding money, small valuables, or fortunes in bonds that dramatically changed their lives.

The story of this business and how it nurtured so many is explored in this publication so we can better understand the experiences of our ancestors.



Home and Work— Above is 332 Water St., Manhattan, showing a building that housed both a family and their paper stock business. The truck loaded with waste paper bags is visible in the lower right.

The history of what was called the “paper stock” and now called paper recycling goes back a long way. In the US it can be traced to 1690 when paper was made from rags rather than wood pulp.

In New York City, there was a problem with waste management. New York’s primary method for disposing of its waste was simply to dump it into the ocean. In 1895, Commissioner George Waring instituted a waste management plan that eliminated ocean dumping and mandated recycling. Household waste was separated into three categories: food waste, which was steamed and compressed to eventually produce grease (for soap products) and fertilizer; rubbish, from which paper and other marketable materials were salvaged; and ash, which along with the nonsalable rubbish was landfilled. This lasted until 1918 when the laws in New York changed.

Waste paper was initially recycled to make fine writing and printing papers; newspapers and magazines; but over time it was prized because a surprisingly large number of products could be made from it like: household paper products such as paper towels, napkins, facial and toilet tissue; office products including copy paper, file folders, envelopes, and adding machine tape; packaging products (cereal packages, egg cartons, gift boxes), and cardboard boxes; game boards; animal bedding; and insulation.

The question for us is how did so many Cracotans get involved in this industry.

We know the earliest immigrants from Craco, arriving in the early 1880s, for the most part, had skills like tailoring and barbering that allowed them to become employed and even become independent businessmen. They were followed by others who lacked the skills that could be easily transferred to the new metropolitan environment in New York City but were willing and able laborers.

It is highly likely that these ambitious ancestors sought out opportunities aggressively. Perhaps some worked as day laborers at the New York City incinerators sorting debris and realized there was value in waste products.

Records tell us that between 1880 and 1900 only about 387 Cracotans had immigrated to the US. As new arrivals they stayed close together. Logically, if one found a promising opportunity it would have been shared with a paisan.

In 1896, what has been called “the first major recycling center” was started in New York City by the Benedetto family, who had immigrated from Craco. Their family oral history relates that they collected rags, newspaper, and trash with a push cart.

Most likely, they and others from Craco were working the streets of New York much earlier as laborers for the City of New York or other busi-

8 CENTS A POUND PAID CASH
FOR OLD BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS, PAMPHLETS,
MAGAZINES, MANUSCRIPTS,
AND
ALL KINDS OF OLD PAPER.
AND FROM
EIGHT TO FOURTEEN CTS. A POUND FOR RAGS.
 We will guarantee to give more than any other house in the city, and warrant full weight.
REMEMBER FULL WEIGHT!
 Before you sell please give us a call, or by your negligence you may keep dollars out of your pockets. We will send for all kinds of paper stock to any part of the cities of Brooklyn or New York, free of charge.
MANAHAN & MILLAR,
 Wholesale Rag and Paper Warehouse,
 89 Fulton St. Brooklyn, and
 194 William St. New York.

d11 6t*

Nothing New—Recycling is nothing new and this advertisement from 1862 that was published in The Brooklyn Daily Eagle shows the value of waste products. The average income then was about \$15 weekly so the price being paid for waste was meaningful. Several similar ads showed there was a demand for these waste goods. The value in these goods was recognized by municipalities who employed people to scavenge waste. The demand and income provided by waste paper and rags offered opportunities for immigrant individuals without skills or education to become self employed.



Was this the start of Cracotan immigrants in the Paper Stock?—A movie clip from 1903 may show how immigrants got into the paper stock business. Titled, “Sorting refuse at incinerating plant, New York City,” the subject is a group of about thirty men and boys who are sorting combustible refuse, mostly paper, and stuffing it into large sacks. In the background a man in a hat with an emblem on it can be seen unloading trash from a large wagon. The location may have been the New York City Sanitation Department’s East 17th Street facility, or possibly the incinerator at West 47th Street on the Hudson River. This early film was done by Thomas Edison and close examination shows the individuals have the appearance to be immigrants. The two minute long film is visible at the [Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov) website.

nessmen in the “junk” business as it was called then.

Junkmen and the junk trade was a very broad term that covered a wide range of activities focusing on recycling any goods. It was commonplace then to see horse carts, hand carts, and junk yards dealing in these goods. In fact, this was so common that a silent movie, “[The Ragman](#)” featuring Jackie Coogan, the prominent child star of that era was made about the business.

The always shrewd and resourceful Crachesi grasped the opportunity to capitalize on the concept of recycling in the metropolis.

After all, how was it different from their life in Craco as farmers utilizing everything the land gave them and wasting nothing. They were used to hard labor, gleaned the good from the bad and being resourceful with everything.

In New York they didn’t have to plow fields and sow seed but they

could harvest in the streets. It would not be unreasonable to assume there may have been 30-40 Cracotan men with push carts going through Downtown New York before 1900 gathering rags, paper, scrape metal or other waste products that had value then.

Most likely, lacking English skills and trust in other buyers of their goods they chose to deal with each other. This created a mutually beneficial relationship between them and the Benedetto family who served as a brokerage business aggregating the goods from the independent individuals.

Over the next decades of the 20th century this relationship would serve as a foothold to help many of the newly arriving Crachesi immigrants get established and prosper.

Although we surmise that the Cracotan entry into the paper stock trade originated from their observation with recycling efforts by the City of New York, it is interesting how they came to dominate the business over a generation.

Newspaper reports allow us to understand the nature of the business and how it evolved. Initially all sorts of goods that could be recycled were collected. The term, "junk men" was often applied because of the wide range of waste they collected. This was done by men with handcarts or horse carts going through the streets and bringing their loads to a central warehouse that purchased the goods. The waste products were separated, packed, and sold to clients who used the waste products to make new goods.

We know from the Benedetto family, who still operates recycling businesses, that they organized a centralized warehouse in 1897 to gather the goods picked up by them and other independent pushcart men. They developed a relationship with a broker who could arrange for sales of the packed or bailed waste to buyers.


Over time, individuals also were able to open their own small "shops" where they could gather and sort the waste products or paper into grades and get a higher price for it rather than selling it to another dealer. These small shops would store their materials and sell it to a broker in larger lots which also gave them an advantage. In addition, they were also able to sell other goods that were collected to specialty dealers such as rags or metal that was gathered along with paper.

By early in the 20th century it is clear that there was a strong Cracotan presence in the paper stock. The 1907-1908 New York City Business Directory has a listing for "Paper Stock" with a sub heading that reads, "See Junk Dealers; also Rag Dealers" (see the complete list with business addresses on the following page.)

The list shows at least 20% of the businesses were run by Cracotans. Most operated under their own names although some (for example, Chambers Paper Stock and Madison Paper Stock) operated under Americanized business names.

The Cracotan men listed as owners of paper stock businesses were:

- Dominick Benedetto
- Angelo Cantasano
- Dominick Cantasano
- Nicholas V. Cantasano & Brother
- Francisco Colabella
- Biase Donadio
- Joseph Episcopio
- Giuseppe Francavilla
- Joseph Matera
- V. Mastronardi & F. Camperlengo
- Antonio Mormando
- Giuseppe Parziale
- Michael Pascarella



George Carrizzo & Co.
Incorporated

Wholesale Packers
and Dealers in

**Paper Stock, Woolen Rags,
Metals, Rubber, Mill Sup-
plies, Bottles, Demijohns**

192-200 SIXTH STREET
Block through to Seventh St.
BROOKLYN

TELEPHONES 2630 SOUTH
2631

Horse Carts and Handcarts -The newspaper advertisement above for a waste dealer shows the wide range of goods that were collected. After WWI there would be more specialization by dealers into the paper, rag, and metal as the needs of manufacturers became more specific for the types, quality, and grades of waste goods they required to make new products. The ad also illustrates the way goods were gathered in the era before trucks were used. Individuals pushing handcarts through the streets gathered small amounts from households or small businesses while horse carts picked up larger loads of waste from sources like plants and factories.

Trouble in the Paper Stock—The 1903 New York Times news article (right) lists Michael Pascarella and Madison Paper Stock as receiving judgements in their favor for paper stock they sold to another company.

BUSINESS TROUBLES.

New York City.

EUREKA FIBRE PAPER COMPANY.—A judgment for \$1,035 was entered here yesterday against the Eureka Fibre Paper Company of Penn Yan, N. Y., in favor of Michael Pascarella for paper stock sold to the company between Dec. 1, 1902, and June 1, 1903. An attachment was recently obtained here against the company for \$1,477 in favor of the Madison Paper Stock Company for paper stock sold to it between Jan. 1 and June 1, 1903. The attachment was obtained on the ground that it is a New Jersey corporation.

- Andrew Ragone
- James Seccafica
- Gaetano Viverito
- Peter Viverito & Co.

We know that both Michael Pascarella and Madison Paper Stock had been operating since at least 1902 from an August 18, 1903 New York Times article relating to the settlement of a dispute. It is very likely many of the others were as well established in businesses of their own for a long time to get listed in the directory.

Besides providing income, ownership of these businesses gave the men and their families a new status. Giuseppe Francavilla (b.1860, Craco) who had been in New York since 1893, traveled to Craco in 1905 to help his younger brother's family relocate to America. He traveled back with his nephew and listed his occupation as "merchant." Giuseppe's brother and nephews would join him in his paper stock business.

It is difficult to imagine the

size and scope of business operations back then but contemporary news articles give some insight. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported on Feb. 26, 1910 about a fire that destroyed the paper stock warehouse of Nicholas Cantasano at 185 South St., Manhattan. The loss was estimated at \$50,000 - a staggering amount back then that would be equal to \$1,246,000 today!

Events over the next decades would help the industry grow and expand providing owners with opportunities to prosper.

1907-1908 NEW YORK CITY BUSINESS LIST

Paper Stock.

☞ See also Junk Dealers; also Rag Dealers.

Acme Mill Supply Co. 423 E. 120th
 Angelo Peter, 452 W Bway
 ✓ Benedetto Dominick, 1 Peck st
 Betteto Vito, 127 W 3d
 Brown Charles D. & Co (inc) 140 Nassau R 1318
 Bruno Frank & Co, 134 White
 Burnett Dominick, 210 Centre
 Butterworth Edwin & Co, 132 Nassau R 306
 ✓ Calandrolo Joseph, 22 Bleecker
 ✓ Cantasano Angelo, 92 White
 ✓ Cantasano Dominick, 4 York
 ✓ Cantasano Nicholas V. & Brother, 395 Pearl
 Caravetta Domenico & Son, 222 Hudson



Pushcarts and Horse carts—A common sight in Lower New York City during the immigrant era at the turn of the 20th century were pushcarts. They served as a vehicle that one man could use to move considerable amounts of goods, and also if they were selling items the pushcart could be set up on the street to serve as the "store." In this 1890s image two men, with bags of rags they had gathered are resting. Horse carts (shown below) allowed for the gathering of larger amounts of waste goods. Both handcarts and horse carts were used by the Cracotan paper stock men before the introduction of trucks.



Carrano James, 29 Peck st
 Casella Brothers, 31 Vandewater
 Chambers Paper Stock Co, 182 South
 Chase & Norton, 277 Water
 Colabella Francisco, 50 Cherry
 Corello Sabato, 2354 Arthur av
 Cotignola Brothers, 177 South
 Covello Joseph, 211 Spring
 Coyozzoli Philip, 418 E 108th
 Darmstadt, Scott & Courtney, 184 South
 DeAlessandro Joseph, 204 Elizabeth
 Deluca R. & Co, 14 Pearl
 Dezege Carmine, 503 W Bway
 DeZege Brothers, 86 Pine
 Daddato Nicholas, 63 Crosby
 ✓ Donadio Biase, 53 Rose
 Dutch Paul, 200 Wooster
 Emanuel Gust. Nachf, 132 Nassau R 311
 ✓ Episcopio Joseph, 22 Bond
 Fetzter James, 7 Ann
 Fiozlo Nicolo, 23½ Clarke
 Fortgang Benjamin, 844, 1st av
 Francavilla Giuseppe, 10 James st
 Gallo Carno, 54 Vestry
 Gatti-McQuade Co, 250 Lafayette & 89 Crosby
 Gatto Antonio, 352 Water
 Gennetto Loreto, 48 Ann
 Gesbaldi Antonio, 148 Mulberry
 *Godfrey Richard, 414, 3d av, Bklyn.
 Hills George F. 108 Cliff & 9 Hague
 Horwitz Charles, 733 E 146th
 Jaffe & Co, 445 Water
 Joseph & Miller, 226 South
 Lacorazza John & Co, 178 Prince
 Landau Marcus, 150 Nassau R 624
 Lauria James, 419 E 121st
 Libmann Joseph & Co, 21 Vestry & 174 Hudson
 Lincoln Paper Stock Co, 5 James
 Lobosco C. & Co, 452 Pearl
 Luning F. H. 140 Nassau R 1319
 Lyon John H. & Co, 174 Duane
 Madison Paper Stock Co, 5 James st
 Marrino Rocco, 219 William
 Martera Joseph, 45 Mercer
 Mastronardi V. & F. Camperlengo, 42 W 4th
 Messina Barto, 8 Beach
 Mormanta Antonio, 66 Ann *MORMANTA*
 Munzillo Nicholas, 58 Centre
 Muzzio Louis A. 150 Nassau R 1234
 O'Meara Maurice, Co, 448 Pearl
 Orntg Wolf, 157 Cherry
 Padulo James, 158 W Bway
 Palmer Simon S. 12 Maugtu
 Palmieri D. & Sons, 334 Water
 ✓ Parziale Giuseppe, 28 Bond
 Pascarella Michael, 232 W Bway
 Pasquale Angelo, 49 Ann
 Pignatelli Michael, 692 Gwich
 Posner Samuel, 2028, 1st av
 Pricolo Antonio, 135 W Bway
 Rabinowich Noah, 251 E 121st
 Radano John, 52 Vestry
 Ragono Andrew, 33 Peck st
 Ragonetti John, 25 Howard
 Rizzo Angelo, 10 Marion
 Rizzo Antonio & Son, 34 Vandewater
 Rumennell John, 54 Vestry
 Salomon Felix & Co, 140 Nassau R 1116
 Salomon Brothers & Co, 99 Nassau R 710
 Scaramazzo Pietro & Co, 109 John
 ✓ Seccafca James, 4 York
 Shea Dennis, 506 Pearl
 Shea Phillip, 50 Ann
 Shea M. & Co, 51 Ann
 Sinnott John, Paper Stock Co, 504 W 38th
 Speranza Emedio, 32 Bond
 Spinelli D. & Son, 150 Nassau R 1327
 Stamiello Michael, 62 Roosevelt
 Stern David S. 496 E 138th R 15
 Stramerri Francis, 62 Roosevelt
 Syrkin & Back, 299 Mulberry
 Taddonio Joseph, 435 E 107th
 Troiano & Defina, 15 Ann & 44 Rose
 Tucker James J. 63 Prince & 272 Lafayette
 Tuozzo Antonio, 300 W Bway
 Viverito Gaetano, 6 Hague
 Viverito Peter & Co, 159 Grand
 Ward's Owen, Sons, 448 W 39th
 Wood Joseph H. 150 Nassau R 1537
 Wooster Paper Stock Co, 272 Lafayette

1917-1918 NEW YORK CITY BUSINESS LIST

Paper Stock.

(See also Junk Dealers; also Rag Dealers.)

Acadia Mfrs. Supply Co., 78 Wall
 Am. Paper Stock Co., 276 W 25th
 Am. Waste Paper Co., 70 Greene
 Baffiglio Bartolomeo, 376 W Bway
 Benedetto D., 383 Water
 Berzen Nat. E., 309 Water
 Brookman A., 1918 E 163d
 Camberlengo Joseph, 174 W Bway
 Cantasano A. & C., 395 Pearl &
 177 South
 Cantasano Vito G., 177 South
 Carrano M. & Co., 274 Pearl
 Casella Bros., 29 Vandewater
 Chambers Paper Stock Co., 182
 South
 Chelsea Paper Stock Co., 486
 Gwich
 Cifarelli & Fezza, 396 W Bway
 Colebella F., 390 Pearl
 Cotton M., 132 Nassau
 Darmstadt, Scott & Courtney, 178
 South
 De Alessandro Jos., 291 Hudson
 De Luca R., 14 Pearl
 De-Zego Brothers, Inc., 307 Water

Established 1878.

De-Zego Brothers, Inc.
Paper Makers' Supplies

307 WATER STREET
NEW YORK

Telephone, 1153 Beekman

Doddato N. Co., 3 Howard
 Donadio A., 31 Ferry
 Episcopia & Co., 376 W Bway
 Ferrando Jas. & Son, 366 Water
 Fezzi Vincenzo & Son, 9 Ann
 Filardi N. V. Co., 395 W Bway
 Fuelle Jos. & Co., 96 Gwich
 Gaccone B. & Co., 53 Rose
 Galante Thos., 256 E 149th
 Garvan P., Inc., 200 5th av
 General Waste Co., 269 E 2d
 Globe Waste Paper Co., 409 E 22d
 Gotham Paper Stock Co., Inc., 140
 Nassau

Grieco Emanuel, 192 Mercer
 Grossi J., 104 Watts
 Hills Geo. F., 108-112 Cliff
 Landau M., 150 Nassau
 Leonardis Louis & Co., 132 Nassau
 Leoni Jos., 224 Hudson
 Lincoln Paper Stock Co., 6 Wooster
 Madison Paper Stock Co., 40 Commerce
 Main Paper Stock Co., 31 Peck st
 Manhattan Paper Stock Co., 26
 Beaver
 Mastronardi N. & Co., 17 New
 Bowery
 Mastronardi V. & Co., 227 E 6th
 Mazzio Nicholas, 465 Pearl
 Melrose Paper Stock Co., 2862
 Park av
 Monfredo D. & Co., 52 Vestry
 Montclair Paper Co., 1 Bway
 Mormando P., 50 Prince
 N. Y. Old Hat & Waste Co., 254
 South
 N. Y. Waste Paper Co., Inc., 318
 Lafayette
 O'Neill P. F., 417 E 124th
 Pellegrino A. & Co., 316 Pearl
 Pignataro A. & Co., 51 Ann
 Price J. B., 294 South
 Ragone Gerard & Son, 352 Water
 Rizzo A. & Son, 261 Front
 Salvati B., 96 E 138th
 Simonetti M., 456 W Bway
 Stramiello Chas., 407 E 123d
 Tucci Paul, 444 Water
 Tucker Jas. J., 74 Wooster
 Valenti C., 48 1/2 Prince
 Vincenzo A., 132 Nassau
 Viverito G. & Co., 405 Pearl
 Viverito Vito G., 390 Pearl
WILKINSON BROTHERS & CO.,
INC., 419 Broome. Tel. Spring
 7790-5

G. B. P.—There are wholesalers who deal in old newspapers in Brooklyn. Look up their addresses in the Business Telephone book, under the head "Paper Stock."

Sign of the Times—This WWI era public service notice appearing in the Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper shows the interest in informing the public about the need for wastepaper.

Brooklyn Eagle, March 24, 1912

TWO-ALARM FIRE; \$15,000 LOSS.

Two fires occurring virtually at the same time in the vicinity of South Water, Roosevelt street and James Slip, last night, caused unusual excitement among the Italians of the neighborhood and necessitated two alarms and the calling out of the reserves of the Oak street station. The paper stock warehouses of John Cerillio, 334 Water street, and that of Vito G. Contasano, 325-329 South street. After an hour's work, the fires were under control, with an estimated loss of \$5,000 on the Water street building at 10,000 on the one in South street.

PAPER STOCK MEN OF NEW YORK DURING WWI

From 1880 to 1910 over 1,167 individuals from Craco immigrated to the US. Considering the natural growth of families, there were at least 2,000 people with a connection to the town living in New York City. Many of these immigrants, lacking trades or skills, were able to find opportunities working in the paper stock and this would grow over the next decade.

The period between 1910 and 1920 was marked by societal changes and major events. These all impacted the paper stock industry and for the most part added to its growth.

American industrial growth in the decade created prosperity which stimulated demand for goods and products that required recycled items. The demand for waste paper exploded with WWI as the need for paper increased.

During the war, the Waste Reclamation Service, established by the US government to increase war materials, benefitted those Cracese in the paper stock business. By 1917 there were several who had ventured into business on their own and were established as owners in the paper and rag recycling business (see 1917-1918 list on previous page). These businessmen also provided employment and income for family members and other paesani. However, there were great losses too as loved ones were drawn into the war.

We know the story of two paper stock men with a Cracese connection who served in the US Army. They served along with several other Cracotans who were living in Manhattan's Little Italy neighborhood. Both men were drafted and served in 77th Division, known as the "Metropolitan Division" because it was made up of men from New York City.

They both participated in the Muse-Argonne battle and lost their lives in it. Their deaths came just weeks before the end of WWI on Nov. 11, 1918.

Peter P. Benedetto



Peter P. Benedetto was born Sept 5, 1895 in Craco the son of Domenico and Maria Teresa Paduano. After immigrating in 1899 and attend-

ing school he joined his father's paper stock business and obtained his citizenship. He was the business' general manager when drafted and reported to Camp Upton on Long Island, NY for training in September 1917, ultimately reaching the rank of Sargent. The extract of his company's report tells of his bravery in his last battle,

"On Sept. 7, 1918, this soldier led his section across the plateau at Vauxcère, France through a heavy enemy barrage and in plain view of the enemy. When his men became scattered, he remained under shell fire without a thought of personal safety, in order to collect them and place them in their positions. This soldier was known among his comrades for his extraordinary courage, cheerfulness, leadership and devotion to duty.

He is interred in at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery in Belleau, France. In 1930 the US Government organized the WWI Mothers' Pilgrimage and offered to send them to their loved one's final resting place in Europe. Sgt. Benedetto's mother Teresa made the voyage to visit the gravesite.

Nicola Francavilla



Nicola Francavilla was born in Craco on May 15, 1894 to Carlo and Lucia Viggiano. He arrived in New York with his family in 1905 and after completing his schooling joined his father and uncle Giuseppe in the family's paper stock business until he was drafted in September 1917. He was still an Italian citizen but had filed his papers declaring his intention for US citizenship. He went to Camp Upton for training and was made a Corporal. Arriving in France his unit was moved to the Argonne Forest. On September 28, 1918 orders arrived for them to advance into thick woods where they encountered savage machine gun fire. It was during this day that Corporal Nicola Francavilla went missing in action. His body was never recovered

and his sacrifice is marked by a Tablet of the Missing at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery at Romagne, France.

Although the demand for waste paper had increased, the technology of processing it had not changed. This was still a labor intensive business that often included women and children family members. Pushcarts and horse carts were still in use as was hand sorting of paper into different grades. Packing the paper into bales was done with mechanical presses that relied on hand levers and cranks.

Structural changes had taken place the industry and it made a difference for the Cracotan paper stock men in New York.

The Benedetto business had been acquiring industrial buildings that were leased to Cracotans and others in the paper stock. They also formed an alliance with the [Robert Gair Company](#). (Gair was the inventor of the folded cardboard carton in 1890) who by this time owned several paper mills and industrial buildings. It was through this supply chain of Cracotan paper stock men, who were tenants of the Benedetto businesses that waste paper could be assembled in large quantities. The Benedettos were then able to broker and sell it to paper mills. Among the uses of the waste paper by The Gair Company was the production of packaging for Bloomingdale's, Colgate, Pond's and Nabisco who adopted cardboard boxes to package their "Uneda Biscuits" for mass distribution.

The Cracotans in the waste paper supply chain all benefitted from this increased demand and they made good use of their new found prosperity.

Some, like Giuseppe Francavilla (Nicola's uncle) decided to go back to his farming roots and sold his interest to his brother Carlo and other nephew Frank. Giuseppe and his wife Rosa Spera purchased land in Swartswood Lake, NJ and started a farm.

Others took their gains and invested them in new homes in the areas surrounding Manhattan to get their families out of the tenements but still remain close to commute to the city where their shops remained.

One other outgrowth of the war was the introduction of technology to businesses including the paper stock business that would take hold in the next decade.

PAPER STOCK MEN IN THE ROARING 20S

After WWI the US underwent social and economic changes that reshaped the country. This included expanded industrialization, commercialism, and consumerism. These factors all effected the paper stock in New York.

Increased demand for paper came from the consumerism that was sweeping the country. This was driven by the prosperity experienced by post-war industrialization, mass production, new products, and advertising techniques that stimulated purchasing.

Additionally, US economic policy reduced taxes on the wealthy and businesses which further encouraged growth, leading to an economic boom, and a rise in speculative investments.

In line with these changes the paper stock men of New York made changes to the way they operated.

As America transitioned from horse drawn carriages to motor vehicles the adoption of trucks changed the paper stock enabling larger and heavier loads of paper being gathered. Other technology of the period provided for productivity improvements and more profits for the businessmen. Manual presses for bailing paper that were previously hand cranked became driven by electric motors creating larger and heavier waste paper bales that could be delivered to mills for use in making the new paper products that were in demand.

Some larger paper stock dealers made additional enhancements to the recycling process. This included mechanizing the handling and sorting of waste paper following the assembly line concept that was used in mass production.

The size of their businesses and volumes of waste paper they handled is difficult to comprehend today.

An example of the scope of activity is illustrated by a *New York Times* April 10, 1927 news article titled, "Mountains Of Waste Paper Are Collected In The City."

The article, focusing on the waste paper generated in New York City, reports there were 788 businesses collecting tons of paper daily. One unnamed dealer is cited in it as an "average" business with 15 trucks and 30 employees collecting several hundred tons of waste paper daily. The largest quantities gathered were identified as 15-30 tons picked up weekly from Wall Street offices, two to three tons from one large hotel daily, and 20 tons daily from a newspaper publisher. Higher quality waste papers, which were worth more, came from printers and book binders. The waste paper was taken to the dealer's warehouse on the East River where it was sorted. The sorting rooms were divided into sections where there were bins to hold the different grades of paper. The market value of the waste paper for higher



New Meets Old—This photograph from the post-WWI era shows the transition with horse carts in the back ground and a truck being loaded with large bales of paper heading for the mill to be made into new paper products. The scene is at the corner of Roosevelt and South Streets. Babino & Gatto Paper Makers Supplies, painted on the building behind the truck was located at 177 South Street and the truck being loaded was theirs. The horse carts further down the street also have paper stock, materials, bags of waste paper and smaller bales of paper. Although mechanization was creeping into the business there was heavy dependence on manual labor and some special hand tools. The bale of paper shown being loaded was on a hand truck. These heavy hand trucks allowed the paper stock men to manually move bales weighing hundreds of pounds. The individual standing at the back is holding one of the other common tools of the paper stock men—the baling hook.

quality grades was \$2.50 per one hundred pounds then, equivalent to \$34 today.

To put those figures into perspective for the workers, the average pay for US laborers then was fifty cents an hour and in Milan, Italy it was ten cents an hour.

This new-found prosperity started changing the structure of Little Italy with families beginning to leave the Downtown tenement buildings for better conditions. Many moved to the surrounding suburbs that were close enough to Manhattan to commute to work.

Business owners also used their profits to expand including investment in business properties. Another *New York Times* article of September 27, 1929 listing real estate transactions describes the following, "A block front in the lower east side, near the East River, has been assembled by D. Benedetto, Inc. large dealers in paper mill supplies and waste paper, who yesterday bought...the three and five story building at 65, 67, 69 Rutgers Slip, corner of Water Street. ...The structures are to be altered and improved for localizing the four separate units of D. Benedetto, Inc."



A Wedding Day Photograph—Shown above is Domenico Benedetto (b. 1875, Craco) on the left and his son Joseph Benedetto on Joe's 1929 wedding day. Joe and his wife traveled to Craco after the wedding and made the home movie of the town that appears in The Craco Society video, *Craco: Visits through Time*.

PAPER STOCK LISTINGS 1925

PAPER STOCK

(See also Junk Dealers; also Bag Dealers)

Acme Paper Stock Co., 154 Nassau
ADRIATIC MILL SUPPLY CORPN., 62 Thompson
 Am Waste Paper Co., 70 Greens
 Antonino Carlo, 395 W Bway
 Ash & Byrnes, 513 E 114th
 Azzinnaro Angelo, 95 Gwlch
 Babino & Gatto, Inc., 177 South
 Brookman A., 472 Water
 Camperlingo Joseph, 174 W Bway
 Cantasano A. & Co., 395 Pearl
CANTASANO VITO G.,
 185 South. Tel. Beekman 1832-33 & 6648
 Casella Bros., 29 Vandewater
 Cedar Metal & Paper Stock Co., 14 Vandewater
CHAMBERS PAPER STOCK CO.,
 6 Wooster. Tel. Canal 3773
 Colabella & Bros., 181 South
COLABELLA & GRANDINETTI, 390 Pearl
 Corrode Nicola, 89 Wooster
 Corsuti Francesco, 5 E 1st
 Cotton M., 63 Park row
DARMSTADT, SCOTT & COURTNEY, 178
 South. Tel. Beekman 1570
 De Alessandro Joseph, 291 Hudson
 DeLuca R. & S. Durante, 36 Pearl
 Donadio A., 501 Water
DOVER PAPER STOCK CO., 10 Dover
 Durante M. & Co., 31 Peck st
 Ferrando James & SON, 385 Water
GACCIONE BROS & CO., INC., 31 Peck st
 Galante Thos A., 247 E 146th
 Gallipoli P. Co., 309 W Houston
GATTI PAPER STOCK CORP.,
 41 E 42d. Tel. Murray Hill 9537
 Gencarelli D. & Co., 17 Thames
 Giovanizza & Sons, 448 Washn
GIOVE F., D'ARECCA & CO., 84-85 Cherry.
 Tel. Dry Dock 7948
 Grieco Emanuel, 143 Wooster
 Grossi J., 104 Watts
 Guariglia John, 305 South
 Hills Geo. F. Co., 235 South
HUDSON PAPER STOCK CO., 81 Wooster
 Ireland & Thaub, 474 W Bway
JAMES SLIP PAPER STOCK CO.,
 5 James st.
 Latigano Frank & Co., 12 Dover
 Lecce D. & Co., 398 W Bway
 Liberty Paper Stock Co., 159 South
 Lobosco Andrew, 51 Duane
 Madison Paper Stock Co., 24 Grovs
 Maglione Nicholas, 397 W Bway
 Manzino John, 341 E 115th
 Marchese Vito & Co., 222 Wooster
 Marquardt-Hewitt Corp., 250 Front
MASTRONARDI N. & CO., 17 New Bowery
 Mastronardi V. & Co., 227 E 8th
 Melrose Paper Stock Co., 2862 Park av
 Monfredo D. & Co., 52 Vestry
MORAN A. J. & CO., INC., 100 Hudson
 Mormando N. & Co., 479 W Bway

N. Y. Mill Supply Co., 82 Mercer
 N. Y. Old Hat & Waste Co., 264 South
 N. Y. Waste Paper Co., Inc., 149 Wooster
 Pignataro A. & Co., 51 Ann
 Price J. B., 294 South
 Puche A. & Co., 33 Frankfort

RAGONE ANDREW CO., INC., THE,
 5-7-9 James st. Tel. Beekman 4278-4279
 Ragone Bros., 456 W Bway
 Ragone Gerard & Son, 352 Water
 Rinaldi M. A. & Co., 182 South
 Riviello Frank & Co., 3 Wooster
 Rizzo Antonia & Son, 179 South
SERRANTINO D. & CO., 221 Front. Tel. Beek-
 man 9156
 Shea Bros., 49 Ann
 Shea-Dennis, 65 Centre
 Steinberg M. & Son, Inc., 163 Mercer
 Stevenson Louis T., 441 Lex. av
 Stramiello Charles & Co., 411 E 123d
TADDONIO ANTHONY, 405-407 E 109th. Tel.
 Lehigh 5823
 Tanico Vito & Co., 233 Front
 Trolano & Defina, 442 Pearl
 Tucker James J., 67 Prince
 United Waste Paper Co., 43 Crosby
UNITY PAPER STOCK, 29 Peck st
 Vaccaro & Presta, 395 Pearl
 Vitarelli U., 11 James st
 Viverito Vito G. & Son, 371 Pearl
 Vuono & Sorrentino, 221 Front
 Wallis J. N., 644 W 44th
WILSON PAPER STOCK CO., INC., 462 W 19th

The
Andrew Ragone Co.,
 Inc.
 Paper and Paper Mill
 Supplies

Telephone Beekman 4278-4279
 Cable address, "RAGONECO." New
 York, A. B. C. Code, 5th Edition.

5-7-9 JAMES SLIP NEW YORK

Telephone Walker 1363

PAUL TOCCI
 Paper Makers' Supplies

525-527 BROOME STREET
 NEW YORK

PAPER STOCK LISTINGS 1927

PAPER STOCK

(See also Junk Dealers; also Rag Dealers)

Acme Paper Stock Co., 154 Nassau
ADRIATIC MILL SUPPLY CORPN., 62 Thompson

Am. Waste Paper Co., 70 Greene
 Antonino Carlo, 396 W Bway
 Ash & Byrnes, 113 E 114th
 Azzinnaro Angelo, 96 Gwlch
 Babino & Gatto, Inc., 177 South

BORELLI T. & SON,

384-86 Water

Brookman A., 472 Water
 Camperlengo Joseph, 174 W Bway
 Cantasano A. & Co., 395 Pearl

CANTASANO VITO G.,

185 South. Tel. Beekman 1832-33 & 6648

Casella Bros., 29 Vandewater
 Cedar Metal & Paper Stock Co., 14 Vandewater

CHAMBERS PAPER STOCK CO.,

184 South. Tel. Beekman 3748

Colabella & Bros., 181 South
COLABELLA & GRANDINETTI, 390 Pearl

Corrode Nicola, 89 Wooster

Corsuti Francesco, 5 E 1st

Cotton M., 63 Park row

DARMSTADT, SCOTT & COURTNEY, 178

South. Tel. Beekman 1270

DE ALESSANDRO JOSEPH, 224 W 24th

DeLuca R. & S. Durante, 36 Pearl

Donadio A., 501 Water

DOVER PAPER STOCK CO., 10 Dover

Durante M. & Co., 31 Peck st

Ferrando James & Son, 366 Water

GACCIONE BROS & CO., INC., 31 Peck st

Galaute Thos. A., 247 E 146th

Gallipoli P. Co., 200 W Houston

GATTI PAPER STOCK CORP.,

41 E 42d. Tel. Murray Hill 0537

Gencarelli D. & Co., 17 Thames

Giovanizzo & Sons, 448 Washn

GIOVE F., D'ARECCA & CO., 86-88 Cherry.

Tel. Dry Dock 7948

Grieco Emanuel, 148 Wooster

Grossi J., 104 Watts

Guariglia John, 205 South

Hills Geo. F. Co., 236 South

HUDSON PAPER STOCK CO., 31 Wooster

Ireland & Thaub, 474 W Bway

JAMES SLIP PAPER STOCK CO.,

561 Water

Latigano Frank & Co., 12 Dover

Lecce D. & Co., 398 W Bway

Liberty Paper Stock Co., 159 South

Lobosco Andrew, 51 Duane

Madison Paper Stock Co., 24 Grove

Maglione Nicholas, 397 W Bway

Manzino John, 341 E 115th

Marchese Vito & Co., 222 Wooster

Marquardt-Hewitt Corp., 250 Front

MASTRONARDI N. & CO., 17 New Bowery

Mastronardi V. & Co., 227 E 6th

Melrose Paper Stock Co., 2862 Park av

MITCHELL PAPER STOCK CO., INC., 148

Wooster

Monfredo D. & Co., 52 Vestry

MORAN A. J. & CO., INC., 100 Hudson

Mormando N. & Co., 479 W Bway

N. Y. Mill Supply Co., 83 Mercer

N. Y. Old Hat & Waste Co., 254 South

N. Y. Waste Paper Co., Inc., 149 Wooster

Pignataro A. & Co., 51 Ann

Price J. B., 294 South

Puche A. & Co., 33 Frankfort

Ragone Bros., 456 W Bway

Ragone Gerard & Son, 352 Water

Ragone Paper Stock Co., Inc., 25 Bway

Rinaldi M. A. & Co., 182 South

Riviello Frank & Co., 3 Wooster

Rizzo Antonia & Son, 179 South

SERRANTINO D. & CO., 221 Front. Tel. Beekman 0155**SHEA BROS.,**

49 Ann

Shea-Dennis, 65 Centre

SILBERMAN S. CO.,

25 Bway

STECK WILLIAM & CO.,

13 Park row. Tel. Barclay 8976

Steinberg M. & Son, Inc., 163 Mercer

Stevenson Louis T., 441 Lex. av

Stramiello Charles & Co., 411 E 123d

TADDONIO ANTHONY, 405-407 E 109th. Tel. Lehigh 5822

Tanico Vito & Co., 233 Front

Trolano & Defina, 442 Pearl

United Waste Paper Co., 43 Crosby

UNITY PAPER STOCK, 29 Peck st

Vaccaro & Presta, 395 Pearl

VIGNOLIA F., 511 E 19th

Vitarelli U., 11 James st

Viverito Vito G. & Son, 371 Pearl

Vuono & Serrentino, 221 Front

WILSON PAPER STOCK CO., INC., 452 W 19th

STARTING THE DAILY PROCESS



Early Morning Start—The Cracotan paper stock men of New York were early risers getting out and picking up the waste paper at their customers before the City became busy. Shown left is a half loaded truck at a stop where waste paper was picked up. The burlap bags, filled with waste paper were usually piled up by the business in a area that was accessible to the paper stock men. Often there were scheduled days and time of pick-up. The loader on the street can clearly be seen holding his “hook” the ever present hand tool for paper stock men. Everyone also carried a pocket knife to help with the cutting open or tying the cord used to close the bags.

The individual stacking the bags on the truck was probably the driver. This was a prized job, and required responsibility for the truck and also business contacts with customers, building superintendents, and other individuals the men came in contact with during their work. An important part of the driver's job was to represent the business by maintaining good relationships with the people they interfaced with. This included making payments, tipping building staff that helped them, collecting bills, and opening new accounts. In smaller companies this may have been the owner, one of the partners, or a family member.

The truck, was typical of those preferred for paper stock work in that era, with an open body and moveable stakes that could accommodate different configurations depending on what was being loaded on the truck. While driving with a load, the rear would be covered by a tarpaulin to reduce littering.

Photographs courtesy of the Benedetto family



Unloading—Once the bagged waste paper was picked up from customers and the truck was fully loaded it would return to the “shop” as it was called where the bags were unloaded. The image above shows a fully loaded truck with a paper stock man on top of the load tossing bags down to the loading dock where other men would bring it inside and store it for sorting.

The photograph right shows one of the modern improvement that made moving material easier—a vertical conveyor that ran up through the floors of the warehouse. This scene was at 520 Water Street, Manhattan and at one time the conveyor was reputedly the longest inside a building in the US.

The conveyor ran up to the top of the building and the different businesses occupying space in the building would take turns using it to load and unload material.



MAKING THE GRADE



Sorting and Packing—As the trucks were unloading the bags of waste paper were stacked inside the dealer's warehouse or "shop" as it was referred to by them. In large buildings mechanical conveyors aided in moving goods. In smaller shops this was done manually as was most of the other work.

Shown in the upper left, bags are taken off a conveyor that lifted them inside the building from the street level and then are being placed on a vertical conveyor (photograph upper right) that allowed them to be moved to an area that held them until being sorted.

Sorting, (shown center left and right) allowed the waste paper to be "graded" since each type brought a different value when sold. These images show there were more than paper stock men in this era with women working in the sorting process too. The sorted paper was put in bins and when there was enough to bail it was put into a press (photo left) that compressed the paper and then stored until being sold and shipped to mills.

Photographs courtesy of the Benedetto Family

SHIPPING THE GOODS

The culmination of all the efforts of sorting and packing the paper into bales was selling them to paper mills. This was handled through a broker and prices for the different grades of paper was based on the demand the mills had at any time for them to use in making products.

The price for waste paper varied on market conditions and the grade of paper. Mixed papers, which was mostly office waste, was the lowest grade and brought a low price. Sometimes when the price dropped too low this paper was taken to dumps until demand and prices from the mills rose.

The better grades of paper (for example, colored ledgers, white ledgers, corrugated), which brought higher prices also changed over time based on the differing needs for papers that the mills needed to produce goods. An illustration is the demand for tabulator (punched) cards that were used to program mainframe computers in the mid-20th century. From not being a grade in the early part of the century they were the most valuable waste paper by the 1960s as vast amounts were needed until computer programming changed in the late 1970s and "tab cards" are now almost non-existent.

This change, driven by technology was always a factor in the paper stock business. These photographs illustrate some of that change. The photograph to the top-right shows the electric baling machine which enabled larger and heavier bales to be packed. In the photograph below a bale of paper is removed from the press and going to be weighted on the scale in front of it. The weight would be marked on the side of the bale so the owner would be able to calculate what was available to ship. (These 1940 photographs shows Dominick Colabella (b. 1891, Craco) owner of Clifton Paper Co., are courtesy of the Colabella family.)

Shipping the bales to the paper mills was done by large tractor trailers which had replace the smaller trucks of previous decades. The more modern tractor trailer truck was capable of carrying significantly more material than earlier equipment. The truck shown below has a load of corrugated paper (old boxes) that would be used by the mills to create new stock.

At the mills the used paper would be unloaded and dumped into large vats of acids that broke the paper down into pulp which was formulated into a paper for another product.

Since the price paid to the paper stock dealer was based on weight (usually a certain amount per hundred pounds) sometimes tricks were used to increase the weight of the bales. It was known for bales to be returned from the mills after they were discovered to contain more than paper.

There are stories of bathtubs, kitchen sinks, and toilet bowls returning to a paper stock dealer inside a bale of paper.

But there were also other stories of mills asking for bales from certain dealers knowing they contained more than paper. Apparently, one dealer decided to get rid of the wire strapping he had by putting it in bales of corrugated cardboard. The mill never caught it until the mixing process was completed but realized the added material actually helped the process by wrapping around the acid vat's cutting blades improving their efficiency.



PAPER STOCK LIST—1932

PAPER STOCK

(See also Rag Dealers)

AM. WASTE & BAG CO.,

245 Wallabout, Bklyn
 Antonino Carlo, 396 W Bway
 Ash Sol., Inc., 1440 Bway
 Azzinnaro Angelo, 96 Gwich
 Babino & Gatto, Inc., 177 South

BORELLI T. & SON,

184 South
 Brookman A., 472 Water

CANLASANO BROS.,

185 South. Tel. BEekman 3-1832
 Cantasano D., 63 Crosby
 CARRANO JAMES SONS, 563 Water
 Casella Bros., 29 Vandewater
 Cedar Metal & Paper Stock Co., 14 Vandewater

CHAMBERS PAPER STOCK CO.,

518 Water. Tel. ORchard 4-2300
 Colabella & Bros., 181 South
 Colabella & Viverito, 13 James st
 Cotton M., 63 Park row
 DARMSTADT, SCOTT & COURTNEY, 150 Nassau. Tel. BEekman 3-1270

DE ALESSANDRO JOSEPH, 524 W 34th

Deluca R. & S. Durante, 36 Pearl
 Donadio A., 501 Water
 Durante M. & Co., 31 Peck st
 Ferrando James & Son, 366 Water
 GACCIONE BROS & CO., INC., 31 Peck st
 Gallipoli P. Co., 200 W Houston

GATTI PAPER STOCK CORP.,

122 E 42d. Tel. LExington 2-9167-8-9
 Gencarelli D. & Co., 17 Thames
 Giovanizzo & Sons, 448 Washn
 GIOVE F., D'ARECCA & CO., 557 Water
 Tel. DRy Dock 4-7948
 Grieco Emanuel, 148 Wooster
 Grossi J., 104 Watts
 Guariglia John, 205 South
 Ireland & Thaub, 121 Sullivan

JAMES SLIP PAPER STOCK CO.,

198 No. 4th st, Bklyn
 Latigano Frank & Co., 12 Dover
 Lecce D. & Co., 398 W Bway
 LESHNER CORP., 277 Bway
 Liberty Paper Stock Co., 159 South
 Lobosco Andrew, 51 Duane
 Madison Paper Stock Co., 34 Grove
 Maglioni Nicholas, 397 W Bway
 Manzino John, 341 E 115th
 Marcheso Vito & Co., 222 Wooster
 Marquardt-Hewitt Corp., 250 Front
 MASTRONARDI N. & CO., 236 South
 Melrose Paper Stock Co., 215 E 149th
 MITCHELL PAPER STOCK CO., INC.,
 13 Gansevoort

MOLITERNO WASTE PAPER CO., INC.,

440 Water
 MORMANDO N., 497 W Bway
 N. Y. Waste & Wool Stock Co., 53 Pitt
 Pignataro A. & Co., 51 Ann
 Price J. B., 294 South
 Puche A. & Co., 33 Frankfort
 RAGONE BROS., 563 Water
 RAGONE GERARD & SON, 352 Water
 Ragone Paper Stock Co., Inc., 25 Bway
 RINALDI BROS., 34 Vandewater
 Riviello Frank & Co., 3 Wooster
 Rizzo Antonia & Son, 179 South

SHEA BROS.,

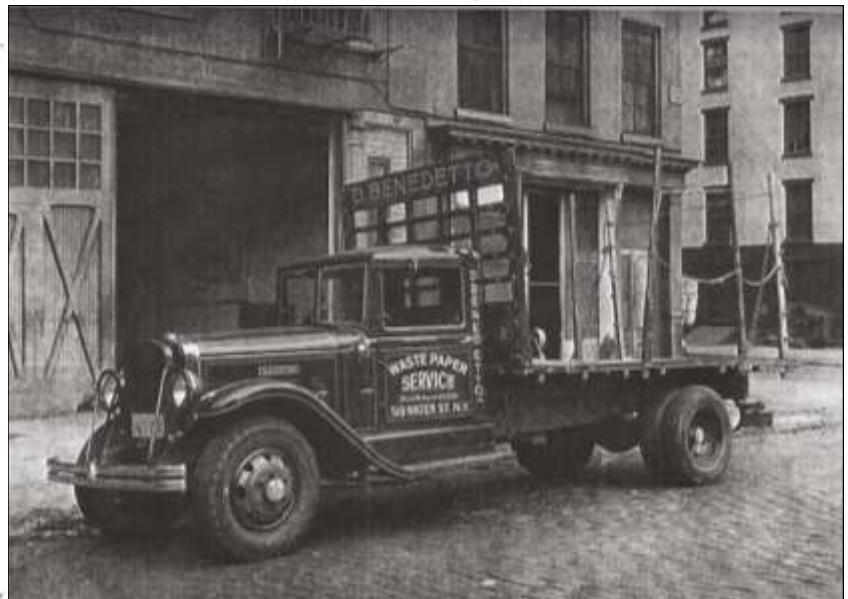
49 Ann
 SHEA-DENNIS, 49 Ann

STECK WILLIAM & CO., INC.,

38 Park Row. Tel. BARclay 7-8976
 steinberg M. & Son, Inc., 163 Mercer
 stramiello Charles & Co., 411 E 123d
 Tanico Vito & Co., 233 Front
 Troiano & Defina, 442 Pearl

VACCARO A.,

178 South
 VIGNOLIA F., 511 E 19th
 Vitarelli F., 4 Hague
 Williams Bauer Corp., 154 Nassau.
 WILSON PAPER STOCK CO., INC., 452 W 19th
 Tel. CHelsea 3-3637



Consolidating Presence—During the period between the World Wars (1918-1939) the Cracotan presence in the paper stock in New York became solidified. By this time, there were two generations working in the industry as sons joined the businesses established by their immigrant fathers. The industry served as an opportunity for employment to many of the Cracotan immigrants arriving prior to 1924 when the US closed immigration. Many of them lacked education, trade skills and couldn't speak English but were able to connect with their paesani who were established in the paper stock business. They could obtain jobs based on their willingness to do the hard labor the job required. Comfortable with employers they knew and trusted and being able to converse with them and the other employees in the dialect they spoke the new immigrants felt secure in their employment as they struggled to assimilate.

As Cracotan immigrants got settled they usually moved to better housing than initially available in the Manhattan tenements but remained within commuting distance to the areas where the paper stock buildings were located, generally along the Lower East Side. As their children became educated sons joined the businesses and provided energy to expand operations. This trend would continue until after WWII when economic and social changes impacted the industry.

PAPER STOCK LIST—1934

PAPER STOCK

(See also Rag Dealers)

Antonino Carlo, 396 W Bway
Ash Sol., Inc., 1440 Bway
Azzinnaro Angelo, 96 Gwich
Babino & Gatto, Inc., 177 South

BORELLI T. & SON,

184 South

Brookman A., 473 Water

CANLASANO BROS.,

185 South. Tel. BEekman 3-1832

Cantasano D., 63 Crosby

GARRANO JAMES SONS, 563 Water

Casella Bros., 29 Vandewater

Cedar Metal & Paper Stock Co., 14 Vandewater

CHAMBERS PAPER STOCK CO.,

518 Water. Tel. ORchard 4-2300

Colabella & Bros., 181 South

Colabella & Viverito, 13 James st

Cotton M., 63 Park row

DARMSTADT, SCOTT & COURTNEY, 150 Nassau.

Tel. BEekman 3-1270

DE ALESSANDRO JOSEPH, 524 W 24th

Deluca R. & S. Durante, 36 Pearl

Donadio A., 501 Water

Durante M. & Co., 31 Peck st

Ferrando James & Son, 366 Water

GACCIONE BROS & CO., INC., 31 Peck st

Gallipoli P. Co., 200 W Houston

The 1930s saw a decade of consolidation of Cracotan business owners in the paper stock. During this period two generations were able to work together in these family owned businesses to solidify the gains that were made earlier.

The first generation that had arrived at the turn of the century was joined by their sons in running the businesses. The younger generation business practices that were learned in schools augmented the practical experience their fathers had from years in business. This second generation would carry the businesses forward for the next several decades.

With the arrival of the Great Depression there was an increased emphasis on conserving and reusing goods as part of the frugality mindset that was prevalent before the consumer culture began to replace it in the 1950s.

For the paper stock industry, this was a boon as manufacturers sought the waste products they recycled. By the end of the decade war broke out in Europe increasing demand and generating higher prices for waste paper. Although the US would not enter the war until the end of 1941 the federal government, in anticipation, set up the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply. Among the actions the agency took was to control and stabilize prices for waste paper. Working in conjunction with dealers they established a price based on the "New York Market" that buyers agreed to use in purchasing the baled paper. Prices were established at \$11-\$16 per baled ton depending on the grade of paper. This is equivalent to \$192-\$275 in today's dollars and gave the paper stock dealers room to make good profits.

In addition to the sale of the baled papers, there were also additional sources of income for the businessmen. These included charging for waste removal for some customers that had low grade paper (for example office waste). They were also able to recycle other items found in the waste paper such as bottles, metals, and postage stamps. The Cracotan paper stock men emerged for the Depression in good shape but would face the challenges of WWII shortly.

Gencarelli D. & Co., 17 Thames
Giovanizzo & Sons, 448 Washn
GIOVE F., D'ARECCA & CO., 557 Water
Tel. DRy Dock 4-7948

Grice Emanuel, 148 Wooster

Gross J., 104 Watts

Guariglia John, 205 South

Ireland & Thaub, 121 Sullivan

JAMES SLIP PAPER STOCK CO.,

198 No. 4th st, Bklyn

Latigano Frank & Co., 12 Dover

Lecce D. & Co., 398 W Bway

LESHNER CORP., 277 Bway

Liberty Paper Stock Co., 159 South

Lobosco Andrew, 51 Duane

Madison Paper Stock Co., 24 Grove

Maglione Nicholas, 397 W Bway

Mansino John, 341 E 116th

Marchese Vito & Co., 222 Wooster

Marquardt-Hewitt Corp., 250 Front

MASTRONARDI N. & CO., 236 South

Melrose Paper Stock Co., 215 E 149th

MITCHELL PAPER STOCK CO., INC.,

13 Gansevoort. Tel. WATkins 9-8130

MOLITERNO WASTE PAPER CO., INC.,

440 Water

MORMANDO N., 497 W Bway

N. Y. Waste & Wool Stock Co., 53 Pitt

Pignataro A. & Co., 51 Ann

Price J. B., 394 South

Puche A. & Co., 33 Frankfort

RAGONE BROS., 563 Water**RAGONE GERARD & SON, 352 Water**

Ragone Paper Stock Co., Inc., 25 Bway

RINALDI BROS., 34 Vandewater

Riviello Frank & Co., 3 Wooster

Rizzo Antonia & Son, 179 South

SHEA BROS.,

11 James Slip

STECK WILLIAM & CO., INC.,

38 Park Row. Tel. BARclay 7-8976

Steinberg M. & Son, Inc., 163 Mercer

Stramiello Charles & Co., 411 E 123d

Tanico Vito & Co., 233 Front

Trolano & Defina, 442 Pearl

VACCARO A.,

178 South

VIGNOLIA F., 511 E 19th

Vitarelli F., 4 Hague

Williams Bauer Corp., 154 Nassau.

WILSON PAPER STOCK CO., INC., 462 W 19th

Tel. CHelsea 3-3637

THE CRACOTAN PAPER STOCK MEN IN WWII

The decade after the Great Depression of the 1930s marked a unique time for the Cracchesi in New York City. The community was centered in tight surroundings allowing for frequent interaction. Those living in Downtown Manhattan inhabited the Little Italy area including Roosevelt and Baxter Streets with similar concentrations in sections of Brooklyn. The men from both areas commuted into the Downtown areas six days a week to work at the paper stock businesses congregated there.

There was also a demographic concentration at this point in time with three generations of Cracotans clustered together. The 1941 Annual Dinner Dance of the *Società San Vincenzo Martire di Craco* held on the eve of the San Vincenzo Feast at the Half Moon Hotel in Brooklyn serves to show how tightknit the community still was. On that night, 500 people attended.

The first generation of immigrants were now 50-60 years old but continued to work while watching their children and grandchildren prosper. The second generation, now in their 30s-40s, had assimilated into American culture and many followed their fathers into the family businesses.

Within the paper stock, this created a consolidation as the original founders of businesses began turning them over to their sons. The timing would be fortunate.

With the onset of war in Europe in late 1939 a growing demand for waste paper began. The US Government reacting to the outbreak of war and sensing an impending crisis created administrative bureaus to manage resources. For example, the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply was involved in setting waste paper prices as early as August 1941, months before the US entry into the war. As had happened 30 years earlier, war brought prosperity to the paper stock men.

Waste paper was deemed a vital resource and cam-



URGENTLY NEEDED FOR WAR - YOUR WASTE PAPER
ESPECIALLY BROWN PAPERS AND CONTAINERS!

Read How Waste Paper Has Become a Vital "WEAPON OF WAR!"

A critical shortage of waste paper has developed—especially brown papers and containers—due to heavy war demands for more and more paper products. In addition to being the chief ingredient in the making of millions of containers that form endless supply lines to the fighting fronts, waste paper has become an actual "weapon of war!"

Through the ingenuity of war-time developments, paper is now being converted into bomb bombs, blasting powder bags, shell containers, overseas cartons, and other essential military needs. Paper mills in this area are facing a curtailment of war production unless more waste paper is salvaged by families, stores, and factories in and near this city.

PAPER MOST URGENTLY NEEDED

- Old Containers
- Wrapping Paper
- Newspapers and Magazines
- Store Bags
- Corrugated Paper
- Wastebasket Paper
- Boxes

To aid pick-up crews, please flatten out boxes and stack loose paper in easy-to-handle bundles.

TO SEND to Dealers or TO GIVE to charitable or other organizations, call for a collector at:

Wastonia—River 3-1888 Green—Green 3-0775
 Elm—Elm 3-1188 Sunset—Elm 7-1388
 Bronx—845 3-0887 East and Army Dr.—Mater 3-1317

SPONSORED BY WAR PRODUCTION BOARD, NEW YORK CITY DISTRICT

paigns were launched to educate the public. Although individuals and school children gathered paper and other items to support the war effort their contributions were minimal; literally the heavy lifting was done by the men in the paper stock.

The value of paper stock men was recognized by the government in several ways, including recognition as a vital industry, exemption of employees from the military service, and giving the businesses additional access to heavily rationed gasoline to run their trucks.

New techniques were introduced to meet the needs of wartime demand. Previously, the paper stock in New York City served as feeders to local mills in New Jersey and Upstate New York. With WWII railroad freight cars were used to move large amounts of baled paper to mills in more distant areas. This expanded the distribution system of the industry which would be needed in the future as post-war consumer demand would be factor in the next decades.

At the end of the war, as conditions began returning to normal the paper stock business owners began facing new challenges. In 1946 they formed the New York Waste Paper Removers and Packers Association, Inc., to address these issues. There were also a similar sounding trade-waste organizations formed at that time which were removing garbage and other non-recyclable materials from businesses; these were referred to as "carting" companies. The distinction between the paper stock and carting would become important in the next decades after New York City changed regulations governing waste collection.

Left: A 1942 photograph this load of waste paper. It has just then been delivered to a Philadelphia paper mill, where it was made into packing boxes for defense products .

CRACOTAN PAPER STOCK MEN—AFTER 1950

After WWII, the Cracotan paper stock men were faced with several challenges that over the next decades would change the business dissipating the Cracotan presence in the industry.

As the US economy adjusted after the war, it shifted from the military demands to those of consumers and industry. New technologies emerged that created demand for new paper products. The introduction of computing into businesses required increased demand for types of paper such as tabulator cards and form feed printing papers. Consumer marketing companies created demand for paper products like napkins, paper towels, and even pizza boxes. These all were beneficial to the small and large family owned paper stock businesses.

But as these opportunities emerged the Cracotan men in the industry were changing. The business founders, who got the Cracotans started in the trade had passed away or retired leaving the businesses to sons.

This changing demographic also impacted the availability of employees. With immigration closed since 1924 the number of Cracotans who worked in the businesses began to decline as they aged. There was also a declining interest among family members to enter the business as societal preference shifted from labor and trade careers to professional opportunities. This preference for having children enter other professions was also promoted by the Cracotan paper stock men who knew full well the difficulties of laboring in the trade.

The gap in employees were filled by a new wave of immigrants—from within the US. Puerto Ricans and Black Southerners moved to northern cities for the opportunities offered there. Just like the original Italian immigrants they lacked language, education, or other skills but could find employment as laborers. The paper stock was among those industries they found work in. Over time, these newcomers replaced the retiring Cracotan employees completely.

The City of New York was also implementing well intended regulations that added pressure on the industry and would ultimately impact the City negatively.

Plans to redevelop the Downtown area included eliminating many of the industrial buildings that housed paper stock businesses replacing them with housing for the expanding population. This forced the paper stock businesses to shift their locations to other parts of the City, primarily to industrial areas in Brooklyn. The redevelopment plans also included eliminating the tenements changing areas of Baxter Street and eliminating the entire area of Roosevelt Street.

With the destruction of these Downtown locations, that were the historic strongholds for Cracotan and other immigrants, the foundation was laid for the disappearance of cultural immigrant strongholds like Little Italy.

The City of New York also introduced new regulations regarding sanitation. In 1957 they required businesses to obtain their own disposal services from private waste haulers who are licensed by the City. The consequences of this would have considerable impact on the paper stock and the City but it would not be apparent for decades.

The new regulation may have appeared to be a boon to paper stock men. Although they had been working with businesses already to pick up their paper they now had what appeared to be an opportunity to expand.

Those with the capital to invest in very expensive garbage trucks were able to enter the new area of opportunity. Some paper stock businesses added the garbage collection (called "carting") to their operations, some switched from paper recycling to just carting, and some new entrants began carting businesses.

For decades the paper recycling businesses had operating under free-market guidelines – recyclers would bid on the paper waste generated by a building or business, with the lowest bidder "winning" the contract. In this way, used paper grew in value as a commodity, and its associated recycling infrastructure was firmly established.

As soon as the new law was passed, mob-owned carters began infiltrating the paper collection routes, intimidating established recyclers and claiming entire "territories" for themselves. They established zones of operation with "no price-cutting, no open warfare, and all territorial disputes solved by bosses by creating corporate associations as covers for their illegitimate activities. The garbage cartels, controlled mainly by five major crime families, aimed at the paper stock as part of their empire.

In response, the New York Association of Paper Mills, Dealers and Supplies was formed by the legitimate paper stock men. The Association's activity was able to keep the Mafia separated from the paper stock by carving up territories, accounts and making rules about paper customers versus garbage customers. It often met at a West Side Manhattan restaurant called Ponte's Steakhouse at 39 Debosses Street, which was owned by one of the paper stock dealers who had ventured into commercial garbage collection. The restaurant owner's connection with the Mafia and fraudulent practices in the garbage industry emerged publically when the State of New York convicted him and several cartel members of criminal activity in 1997.

But the cumulative effect of all the changes after WWII in New York City surfaced much sooner as their impact pressured the small family owned Cracotan paper stock businesses. By the 1970s they were disappearing.

Having served for decades as feeder for brokers who aggregated large lots of paper for mills they now could no longer remain profitable. The business had nurtured many immigrants and their families since the turn of the 20th century but now the great number of Cracotan who were in the business were either gone or exiting it but they left a legacy that shouldn't be forgotten.



Roosevelt & South Streets — the scene shown in the photograph above, is now gone with the area changed by rehabilitation in the 1950s. When this picture was taken the area was a mainstay of the Crachesi. To the lower right, paper stock trucks with bales of paper that would be recycled at paper mills.

THE CRACOTAN PAPER STOCK MEN OF NEW YORK - LEGACY

At the end of the 20th century changes continued impacting the paper stock industry. World-wide economic expansion created increased demand for many types of recycled goods as new technologies and emerging markets, coupled with environment concerns created a much larger market for waste paper and other goods that were shipped overseas to countries in Asia.

In New York City, where the Cracotan paper stock men had dominated the industry decline of the small family “shops” continued. The factors impacting them were exacerbated by a growing pressure as Mafia controlled garbage companies eyed the paper collection routes, intimidating established recyclers and claiming entire “territories” for themselves. Paper recycling quickly became a part of the vast mafia garbage cartel, controlled mainly by five major crime families. Zones of operation were established, with “no price-cutting, no open warfare, and all territorial disputes solved by bosses.”

It was a stark contrast to how the paper stock businesses had operated for nearly a century under free-market guidelines. Because the mafia arrangement was predicated on collusion, the tradition of open competition among paper recyclers was unwelcome in the new order. Paper recyclers – regardless of their history of service and well-established procedures, were expected either to leave areas altogether (forced out by intimidation), or to join in the conspiracy.

In the 1990s the New York Police began an undercover investigation of criminal conspiracy as the result of the fire-bombing of truck owned by a legitimate company that was an attempt to threaten them. The story was documented in a book, *Takedown: The Fall of the Last Mafia Empire*. Ultimately, it would lead to the arrest and imprisonment of the criminal elements in the industry. But the changes in the paper stock were irreversible.

During the twilight of the Cracotan paper stock men’s era, the “Wall Street Journal” published an opinion piece on August 8, 1961 titled *In Praise of a Junk Dealer*. It recognized the role of “junk men” and their ilk, which included all sorts of dealers in recycled goods. The gist of the article was these small businessmen, although not highly visible and disdained for the nature of their work, contributed greatly to society. It recognized their, “...labor to save, to care for one’s own, to prosper...”. The piece continues recognizing the role played by these individuals for society with, “He gathers up what is useless and puts it to use. The debris that would otherwise be waste is collected, sorted, shipped, and returned again into the stream of raw material that feed our factories. ...who can say that these men ... do

more.”

So, what is the legacy of the Cracotan paper stock men who dominated this unique business in 20th century New York City? And, why were they so successful in coming from a small farming village in southern Italy and competing in the world’s largest metropolis?

First, we can consider how the first Cracotan men and women, who arrived here at the turn of the century, were able to adapt to this business and not some other opportunity in America.

Many of the skills and methods used in the paper stock mirrored things that were done on farms. Loading, unloading, sorting, separating, and grading were all tasks they experienced in their in agrarian life in Craco.

The underlying premise of the paper stock and recycling as a whole was practiced for centuries in Craco by these people where nothing would go to waste.

There is little doubt that as new immigrants came to New York they were eagerly welcomed as employees of earlier Cracotans who had started in the trade. It was an important advantage since those arriving lacked English language and their local dialect may have limited opportunities with other Italian businessmen.

They also brought a mindset for dealing with the risk they faced as entrepreneurs. It was similar to what farmers always had. After sowing their seed they had to hope for a successful crop knowing a variety of calamities could possibly ruin it all.

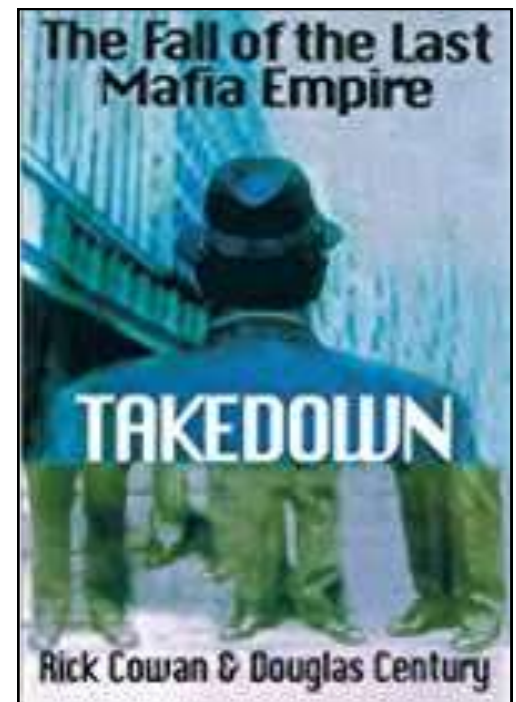
But perhaps the most important element the Crachesi brought with them was their work ethic—they were not shy about working hard to provide for themselves, their families, and this included cooperating with their paesani to help them get ahead, too..

This may be understood by the comments of Sal Benedetto of Chambers Paper Fibers, Corp., in the book, *Takedown*:

“Now, the paper business—that’s a different story. You have to get up earlier in the morning—4am, maybe 4:30. You pick up your paper, sort it, and bale it. And then you try to sell it. The real trick is even though you’ve agreed to pay a fixed price for your customers’ old paper, you never know what you’re getting for that same paper until it’s sold. It’s no different than a farmer going to market: At the end of the day you don’t know what your getting until you got it.”

The days of Cracotan paper stock men, traveling through New York’s Downtown streets, inhabiting

the old warehouses on the Lower East Side, with a whiskey bottle in their desk draw to seal a deal with a paesan, are now long gone. But their legacy lives on in the society that benefited from their labors and in their descendants who are the greatest beneficiaries of their endeavours.



Shown above is the cover of the book that highlights the investigation into Mafia control of the garbage business in New York City in the early 1990s. Mentioned in the book are many details about the paper stock business, the Cracotan connection to it, and individuals who were involved in the trade. A key role in the undercover investigation was played by Sal Benedetto and employees of the Chambers Paper Fibers Corp. at their Brooklyn location on Plymouth Street.

A television interview with Rick Cowen, the lead detective in the investigation and his co-author is available to view online on [C-SPAN](#).