



THE CRACO SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S YEAR END MESSAGE

A MESSAGE FROM THE CRACO SOCIETY PRESIDENT

The past year provided us and the entire world with new experiences and changes in the way we have been able to interact with each other. As I write to you about our organization I reflect on the past 14 years that we have been celebrating our Cracotan heritage. You have my deep appreciation for all your support over these years.

We have grown since our first meeting in 2007 from 55 individuals to 530 active members. Our [Facebook group page](#) has 1100 participants and a newly created [Society page](#) has a continuous feed of photos of interest to us. Both should be on your viewing list. These platforms allowed us to again live stream the San Vincenzo Mass from New York City to people around the world. Our website receives over 2,700 visits annually from around the world. People are interested in us and our mission — that is exciting, inspiring, and humbling.

The experiences from the last two years have taught us much. They prompted us to re-

flect on new and better ways to share the history, culture, and traditions of Craco we preserved since our founding.

Experiencing our in-person gatherings has always been a wonderfully enriching and unique experience. Whether meeting a new member, or having a conversation with a long-time member, I'm struck by the wonderful feelings we share for each other. It seems that we always have a connection or story that is easy to relate. These reinforce my belief that all of us from Craco are "cousins" and drives me to do more to reach a larger audience.

To continue in the tradition of interacting with members and friends we are holding a virtual Christmas Party to give us a chance to meet once again as we always did. I hope you can join us.

**With best wishes for a joyous
Christmas season and Happy New Year**

Joseph Rinaldi

JOIN THE CRACO SOCIETY VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Please join the Society's Board members at our Christmas gathering and feast of San Nicola, the patron saint of Craco.

Sunday Dec. 5, 2021
Between 2:00 – 3:00 pm
Eastern Standard Time (8:00-9:00 pm CET)

You can drop in or out anytime during that period to cheer in the holidays with us.

If you want to participate please message us at memberservices@thecracosociety.org so we can provide the Zoom access information.

See you soon!



CRACO'S OTHER PATRON—SAN NICOLA VESCOVO



San Nicola statue in Craco Peschiera

Although San Nicola is not important to the Cracotan Christmas tradition, he is recognized worldwide as the basis for Santa Claus. In their great wisdom the Crachesi not only adopted San Vincenzo as a patron but also kept San Nicola Vescovo (Bishop) as their patron too.

The history of Craco, *Note Storice sul Comune di Craco*, tells us that the first patron saint of Craco was Santa Barbara. Veneration of her continued until the 13th century when San Nicola became popular throughout Italy and was made the patron saint of Apulia and Sicily along with many cities in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Russia, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

San Nicola was the Bishop of Myra a city on the Turkish seacoast. In the 4th century, after his death, his tomb became a popular Christian pilgrimage site. When Myra came under

Islamic rule sailors from Bari Italy took his body to their home port in 1087. Once there a crypt and ultimately a Basilicata was built for him by the mid-12th century.

In Craco, the Church of San Nicola Vescovo (Chiesa Madre) measured 48 ft. at its maximum width and 90 ft. at the maximum length. It was erected in three different stages: the main section in the thirteenth century, an additional section in the sixteenth century, and in the eighteenth century the dome and some additional windows were added. The interior was restored in the 1800s and decorated on the initiative of Archpriests Molfese and Giannone, with paintings of the Neapolitan school.

The church contained a mixture of styles: a bit Romanesque with a facade that does not have a cornice and some classic Byzantine domes that suggests a presence of the Greek Empire in the area. It was restored several times: late in the eighteenth century, just after the unification of Italy, and again in 1903. The church was maintained, until the 1970s. With the relocation of the church to Craco Peschiera the statues, including the one of San Nicola, (shown top left) were moved to the new location.

Although most of the non-orthodox Christian countries celebrate his feast on December 6th the feast day for San Nicola in Craco was traditionally celebrated on the first Saturday in May. Recently, it is also celebrated on the second Saturday of August in conjunction with the Madonna della Stella feast.

However, he was not entirely absent from the Craco Christmas celebrations. During the week before Christmas, the kitchens in Craco were busy making seasonal specialties including *cartellate* (crisp pinwheel pastries) sometimes called the "dahlias of San Nicola" because of their color and shape and their association with the nuns of a hospice for pilgrims of Saint

Nicholas of Bari.

And of course, on Christmas Eve, families gathered to eat baccala (dried salted cod) and other seafood, then attend midnight Mass at La Chiesa Madre—the Church of San Nicola.

More information about San Nicola can be found at the [St. Nicholas Center](#) website which includes listings and photographs of La Chiesa Madre and Chiesa di San Nicola Vescovo in [Craco](#).

The Board of Directors of The Craco Society would like to wish our members and friends a Blessed Christmas, and a Happy & Healthy New Year!

**Buon Natale
Felice Anno Nuovo**



San Nicola feast day procession through Craco Vecchio in the early 1960s.



**Remember your 2022 dues
We rely on your support**

CRACO—CONFINING THE GYPSIES OF MATERA

The Society received a copy of “Storie di confino: gli zingari nel Materano” (Stories of confinements: the Gypsies in Matera) from Donato Vena. This interesting article about the confinement of undesirable people under the Fascist regime included information about Craco as a location that was used in the late 1930s and 1940s.

Highlighting several cases in the towns in the province of Matera, the author [Cristoforo Magistro](#), gives insights in a unique part of the Basilicata Region’s history. With regard to Craco’s history in this story he reports:

“The third group that we will deal with in this reconstruction concerns three nomads from Trieste, of Italian nationality, confined according to the circular of January 1938.

Despite their precedents (fraud, theft, begging, non-compliance with the expulsion order) are no more serious than those of others, they will be destined to Craco for five years.

The first, Antonia Karis of unknown parents, was arrested in February 1938, when she was already eighty years old, and, held in prison according to the recent provisions on nomads, the ministry recommended that she be reported to the Committee for Confined. His story confirms that the measures provided for in the circular of January 1938 served to test the round-up of gypsies before the specific measures issued in September 1940.

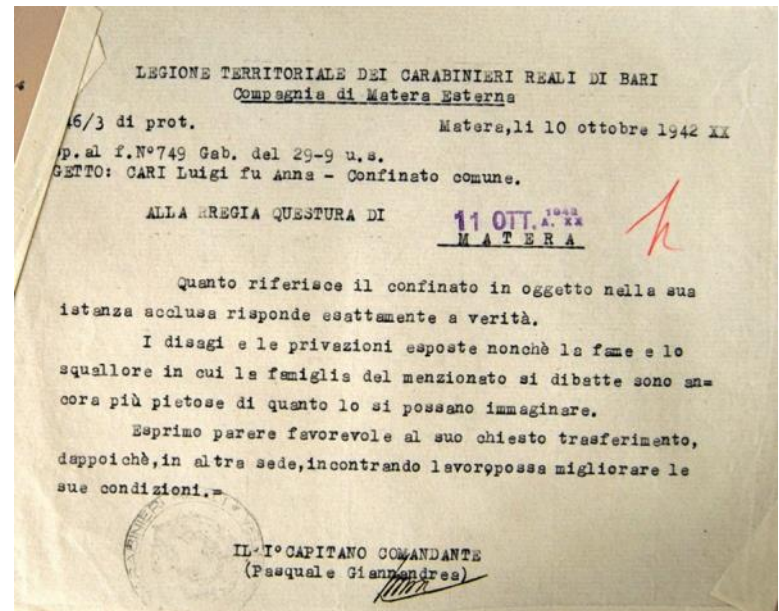
In the same way, 32 year-old Luigia Cari and her 40 year-old husband Rodolfo Cari, were sentenced to the same penalty and place.

The latter is a war victim and his irreproachable behavior in Craco where, unlike the others confined there, participates in all patriotic demonstrations, making him deserving in the eyes of the authorities. Regardless, he and his wife, also poor and in absolute misery, are reduced to conditions such that they can no longer show

themselves in the public but will get the grace of a clothing package.

After the armistice the couple was freed and provided with travel papers to reach Trieste by makeshift means. It was discovered after their release that it had been wrongly granted and in February 1944 they were arrested because the obligation of confinement towards them had been extended to December 1947.

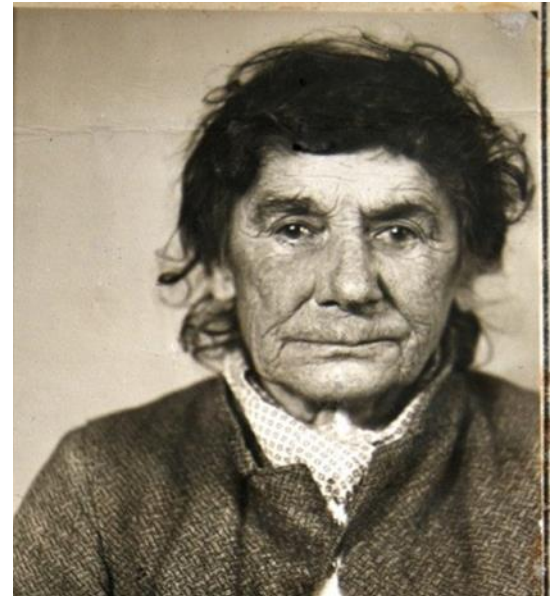
They were photographed and brought back to Craco, on April 18, 1945 but they escaped again and were gone forever.”



A report on the condition of the confined gypsies in a report written by a Carabinieri officer in 1942.



Rodolfo Cari and his wife Luigia Cari, confined to Craco, are reported for irreproachable behavior and patriotism.



Eighty-year-old Antonia Karis sentenced to five years of confinement in Craco in 1938.

IN CRACO WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS . . . *make limoncello!*

Try this recipe for the holidays.

Filippo & Rosa Francavilla's Traditional Craco Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 liter whole grain alcohol 8 lemons-yellow skin only
- 1 liter water 10 oz.
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 oz. (about 3 Tbsp) Karo syrup

Steps

1. Using a vegetable peeler remove skins from the lemons making sure not to get any of the white pith;
2. Place the skins in a glass vessel with the alcohol.
3. Let sit for 4 days.
4. Then boil the water, add the sugar stir until it dissolves and let cool.
5. Strain the alcohol and lemon peels and mix with the cooled sugar water; add the Karo syrup and stir.
6. Place in smaller bottles and keep in the freezer.

Other versions of this recipe can be found with the Flavors of Craco on the website [Recipes](#) page.

Salute!



A GIFT TO MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD CHURCH

The generosity of the members of The Craco Society celebrating the 120th feast day celebration of San Vincenzo Martire di Craco at The Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood allowed the Society to present a check for \$1,000 to pastor, Fr. Brian Graebe, from the offerings sent by members and those pinned to the statue on the feast day.

Viva San Vincenzo!



SAN NICOLA OF CRACO

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
Buon Natale & Felice Anno Nuovo

THE CRACO SOCIETY

HOW TO CONTACT US—COME CONTATTARCI



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