



THE CRACO SOCIETY

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THIS MONTH IN CRACO VECCHIO

While January signifies the beginning of our calendar, the Cracotan year was a rhythmic cycle that never ended. Unlike society today, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day held no special significance in the Cracotan life cycle which was based not on time but rather the needs of the agrarian calendar and the church cycle. An understanding of life there was based on two factors:

The Earth



La Befana

The first half of January was busy with the processing of pork – families would kill the pig they had been fattening since October. Women would make soppressata, pancetta, salami, prosciutto, and lard. One of the delicacies made was “sanguinaccè” a type of pudding made with pig blood

mixed with raisins, almonds, nutmeg, and other spices.

The Church

January 6th — Epiphany but in Craco it is also connected to La Befana. The "Befana" is an old woman, who brings gifts to the good children on Epiphany Eve. Good children would find oranges, almonds, or candy in their stocking. Bad children would find pieces of coal instead. This also marked the beginning of “Carnevale” – a time of feasting and serenades with the “cupa cupa” – a homemade musical instrument.



Of course, for those who immigrated from Craco to the urban environments in North America these traditions changed but are well worth remembering.

See the story behind the Christmas card on pages 3 and 4



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

MSGR. GRIECO—A LIFE OF SERVICE



In the long history of Craco Vecchio, many members of the clergy made an impact on the small town. Most of them were locals and relatives of the citizenry. With immigration to North America, Cracotans found a much larger place and many Italian clerics to minister to their needs but few from Craco.

The Society was blessed to have three priests as members. They made active contributions to the Society to help us preserve our history, culture, and traditions here. With the recent passing of Monsignor Nicholas V. Grieco, we lose someone who was instrumental in our annual celebration of the feast of San Vincenzo.

Msgr. Nick's life story as told in his [obituary](#) is no doubt interesting and informative about the contributions he made to his Diocese. But of more appeal to us, as "Cracotan cousins" were the stories he shared about his experiences.

Msgr. Nick related many times that he always knew he wanted to be a priest and recognized it since he was a six year old living in Brooklyn. Achieving his dream allowed him to have a great impact on many people.

Most Society members came in contact with him at the annual San Vincenzo Feast Day events. His sermons always connected the meaning of San Vincenzo's sacrifice to current events, making the ancient story contemporary.

He also shared stories at Feast Day luncheons that provided wonderful insights.

Msgr. Nick was exposed to San Vincenzo very early on. His father Nicola Grieco was the secretary of the *Società San*

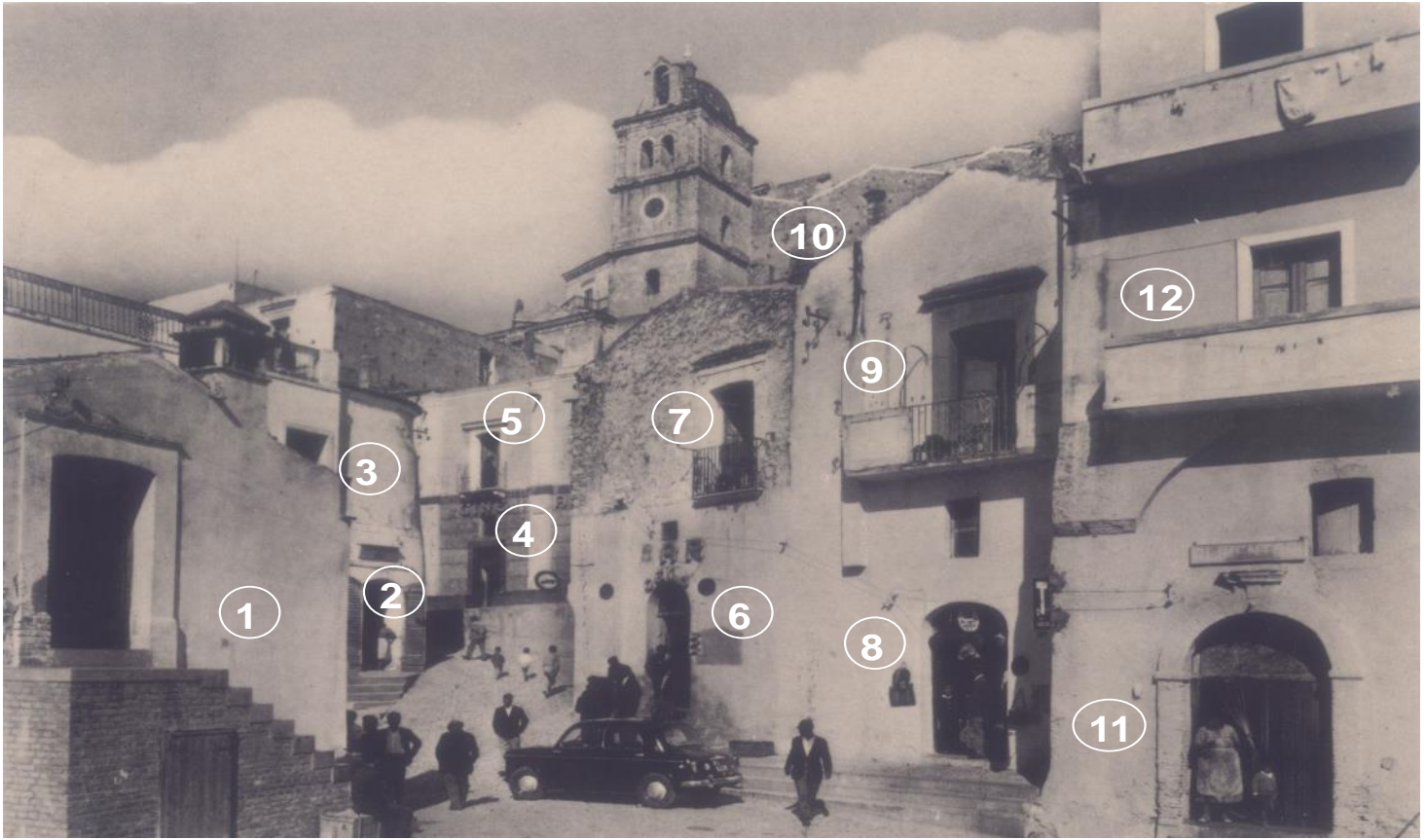
Vincenzo Martire di Craco that was founded in 1901 in New York City. His connection to San Vincenzo would coincidentally emerge again in 1973 when he was assigned to the parish of St. Maurice (San Murizio, the leader of San Vincenzo's Theban Legion).

As part of his seminary education he studied in Rome and made a trip to the Friary of San Giovanni Rotondo where he met Padre Pio and became one of his spiritual children. Meeting a saint in person is an unusual thing but Msgr. Nick had a second encounter with another future saint when in 1986, papal honors were conferred on Monsignor Grieco when he was named Chaplain to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II.

A major part of Msgr. Nick's work in the Diocese of Bridgeport (Connecticut) was establishing their communication program. His ability to reach out to others as a communicator culminated for the Society the last time he celebrated Mass at the Feast of San Vincenzo in 2019. At the height of the Covid pandemic, it was live-streamed from the Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood in New York City and viewed by 1500 people worldwide.

Msgr. Grieco was an active and vital part of the Society and he will be missed by us as we carry on our mission to preserve the history, culture, and traditions of Craco in North America.

THE PIAZZA, LARGO VITTORIO EMANUELE II—circa 1960



4:

The above photograph is from the January 2009 Society Calendar page. Although undated it is known to have been taken in the 1960's and shows the Piazza (Plaza) Largo Vittorio Emanuele II in that era. The Piazza is clearly visible on the southwestern corner of the town on the map of [Craco Vecchio](#). As you can see in this photograph it was located in a lower part of the town. Accessed directly by Corso Umberto I and Largo Alighieri, this piazza housed several shops.

The numbered locations are as follows:

1: Depot belonging to Lo Porchio family. During the San Vincenzo and Madonna della Stella celebrations the bandstand would be placed in the open area near this depot. Behind the depot were other shops not visible on this photo, including: a pharmacy run by the Manghise family, an Inn/Tavern belonging to the Mormando family, a fabric shop belonging to Carmine Serra (originally from Bari), and Giuseppe Iannuzziello's butcher shop. Further left was another smaller piazza used as an outdoor market and also the location of the church of the Madonna del Monserrato (see September photo).

2: Deli shop owned by Carmelina Pucci – she had the best mortadella, cheese, and olives.

3: Home of the Manghise family of chemists, politicians, and teachers. When the elder Signora Manghise was no longer mobile, she converted the upper room (by the terrace) to a school and ran classes there. One of the Manghise children married Anna Coppola from northern Italy – also a teacher.

Craco also had a Cinema, that was operational from the mid 1950s and screened such Italian classics as “Catene”, “Il fornaretto di Venezia”, and “Marcellino, pane e vino.” To the right of the Cinema was a small street with more homes, and a carpentry shop belonging to Antonio Consoli.

5: Home of Anna Spera.

6: Bar belonging to Valerio Santalucia.

7: Home of Giuseppe Lospinoso.

8: Tabacchino shop belonging to Marcello Pantaleo – sold cigarettes, salt (which could only be purchased under license by the state), newspapers, and other convenience items.

9: Home of Angelo L'Episcopia.

10: Sacristy of the Chiesa Madre.

11: Shop belonging to Graziella and Vincenzo Vignola who sold fruits, vegetables, especially legumes and cereals.

12: Home belonging to Dr. DiRiso, later inhabited by Giulia and Pietro D'Elia.

The Society website has an excellent page showing this material along with a current view of the area please visit: [Largo Vittorio Emanuele II](#) and watch for more photos in upcoming newsletters.



2021 Christmas Card Story—The image on the Christmas card was specifically created for the Society by Garnet Armstrong, in 2017 to make the unique scene that has been named the “Craco Nativity Journey.” This year the image was updated and enhanced to use in our online distribution system and on social media by Board member Rita Lavery.

The setting, in the piazza of Craco Vecchio underlies our historic connections to our roots. The Society continues to appreciate the efforts and creativity on our behalf by everyone who assists us throughout the year and especially for giving us this heart-warming and imaginary scene during this magical time of the year.

We all have been blessed.

REMINDER

DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN YOUR 2022 MEMBERSHIP DUES

THE SOCIETY RELIES ON YOU FOR SUPPORT



HOW TO CONTACT US—COME CONTATTARCI

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