



THE CRACO SOCIETY

MAY IN CRACO VECCHIO

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Madonna della Stella Procession - The 1962 Madonna della Stella procession in Craco Vecchio.

The month of May was a very significant and active time in Craco Vecchio. Following the church calendar, and centuries of tradition, on the first weekend in May they celebrated feast days for San Nicola and the Madonna della Stella, starting with a “processione” for San Nicola on the Saturday.

On Sunday, the entire day was dedicated to celebrating Madonna della Stella, starting with a mass in the morning followed by a procession throughout the town.

To receive special favours from the Madonna, people would decorate a “cirio” (a wooden framed structure) with candles. The cirio would be carried by a devotee along with the procession until it reached their home. A small altar was prepared at the house, and prayers were said, thus completing their act of devotion.

In the afternoon, everyone gathered by the Madonna della Stella chapel for potato sac races, horse races, and bicycle races. In the evening, people gathered and ate fave, lupini, and ceci. In the late 50s and 60s some amusement park rides were added for kids. The day’s festivities always ended with a display of fireworks.

For all festas in the town, a committee was formed consisting of 5-10 people and overseen by the priest. Their role was to raise funds and organize the entire festa.

Throughout the month of May there were daily visits to the church of the Madonna della Stella to celebrate mass or to say the rosary.

In the fields, May was also a busy month. The fave and ceci were picked and left in a large pile to dry.

The people also started preparing for the arrival of hired farm hands that came from as far away as Lecce to assist with the grain harvest.



San Nicola Procession—The Saturday San Nicola procession as it enters the piazza.

CRACO FEATURED IN TRAVEL NEWS



The [Travel.com](#) recently published an article highlighting Craco as a “must see” destination. They say, “Craco is an ancient but abandoned Italian village that one really must see and explore. It has an incredible and tragic tale.” The piece provides a concise history of Craco and includes new and unique photographs of Craco Vecchio, such as the one shown above.

CRACO-THE GREATEST OF GHOST TOWNS

The [Open Culture](#) website posted an online article about Italy’s “more than 6,000 abandoned villages.” The authors also contend there are, “according to conservative estimates, another 15,000 have lost more than 95 percent of their residents.” Certainly, sad and disconcerting news.

The article is titled, “Exploring the Greatest of Italy’s 6,000 Ghost Towns: Take a Tour of Craco, Italy.” Included in the article is a video, “[Exploring the Capital of all Ghost Towns: Craco](#).”

The video is part of [Abandoned Italy](#), a web series devoted to exactly that.

The 22 minute video is bitter-sweet. Containing recent and haunting images of the town along with commentary about the history of Craco Vecchio, the videographers clearly identify the challenges it faces as it remains abandoned.



BASILICATA—AUTHENTIC ITALY

[Basilicata: Authentic Italy](#), a book by Karen Haid, explores the region with a purpose.

Haid tells us, after publishing, [Calabria: The Other Italy](#), which grew out of several years living in the region in the toe of the boot, people asked me, “What’s next?” I thought and thought. Conventional publishing would have directed me to add to the shelves of books about Rome, Venice or Florence. That’s what sells, after all. But I wanted to continue my exploration of the lesser known, the underrated.

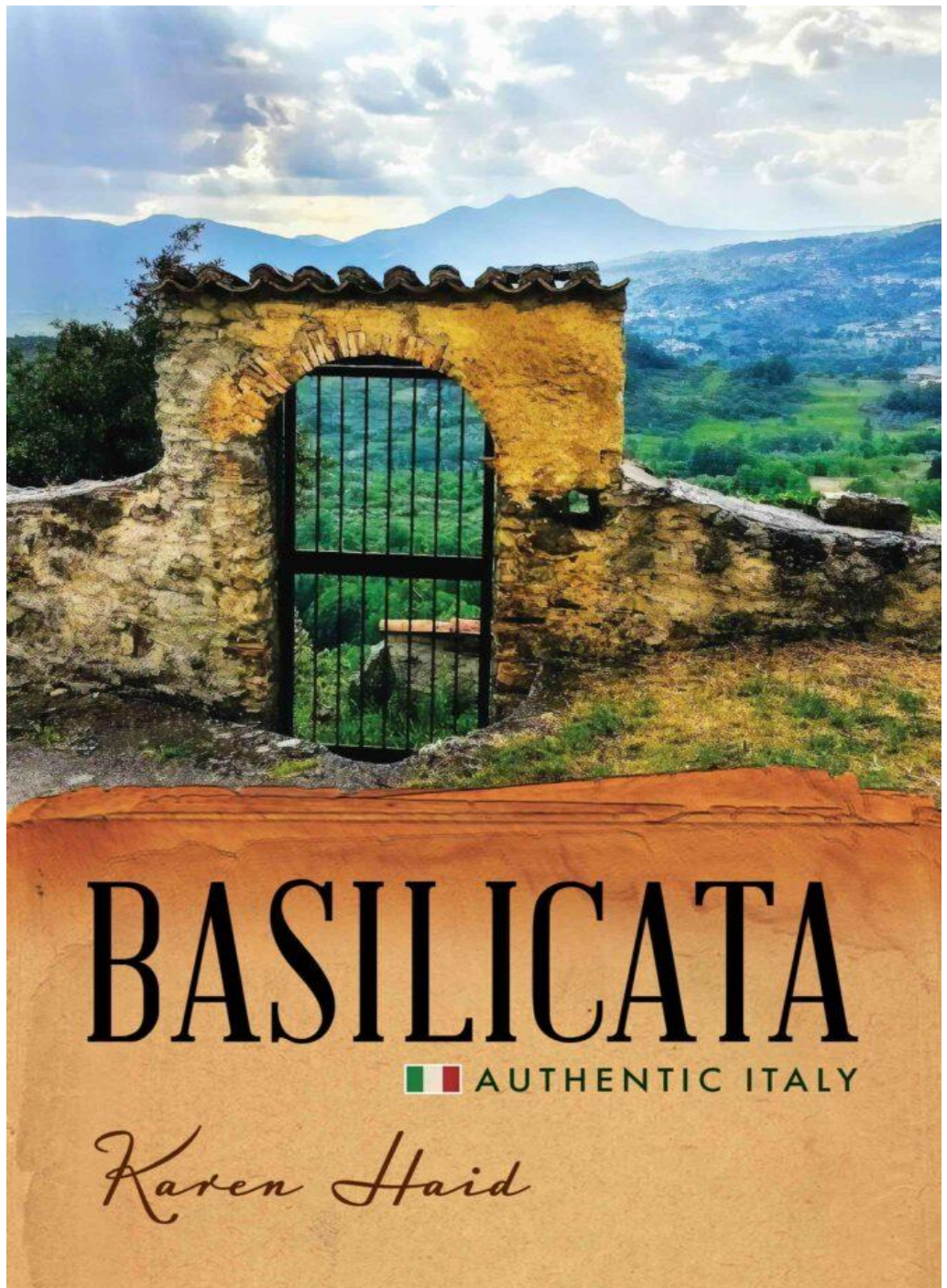
[Basilicata: Authentic Italy](#), examines historical context when coming upon the region’s challenges. How could such a noble land, the birthplace of the likes of Horace and final resting place of Pythagoras become the 20th century’s back and beyond, a place where the Fascists exiled political prisoners? What motivated the likes of Carmine Crocco, Basilicata’s most famous brigand—common criminality or social revolt against the devastating consequences of Italian Unification? At times, progress has seemingly passed the region by, while at others, has wreaked havoc, such as in the case of the ghost town of Craco and big oil in Viggiano. Religion has played its part, as well, and I encounter symbols from ancient burial objects in numerous archeological museums to the Jewish catacombs of Venosa, from the extraordinary Early Christian cave paintings in the Crypt of the Original Sin to Maratea’s Christ statue that rivals Rio’s.

The book in paperback and all e-book versions is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo eBook, Apple Books, and [directly from the author’s website](#). Outside the US it is available through Amazon.

Basilicata Cultural Tour 12-Day Basilicata Land Tour October 11 – 22, 2022

Explore one of Southern Italy’s hidden gems on a comprehensive, small-group Basilicata Tour!

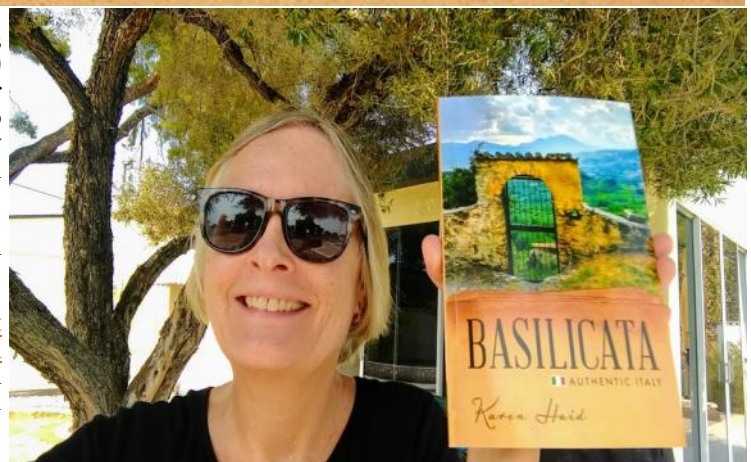
Join Karen Haid, author of [Basilicata: Authentic Italy](#), and travel through a region of magnificent natural beauty, rich culture and longstanding traditions. [Check out the exciting itinerary](#), highlighted by medieval castles and ancient historic sites, excellent food and wine, dramatic mountain scenery, coasts of both the Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas, and of course, the world-famous Sassi di Matera, a UNESCO Heritage Site! Basilicata packs an incredible diversity into the unassuming instep of the Italian boot.



Karen is offering a \$100 discount for tour registration to Craco Society members through May 31st.

How do you sign up?

Go to her [contact page](#) or email [Karen](#) directly and she’ll get in touch with all the particulars!



A REQUEST—PRESERVING THE LANGUAGE

The Federazione Lucana d'America was recently contacted by Rocco Benedetto, who is researching language, with a request for assistance. As a member of the Federation, the Society supports this aspect of our culture. Below is his message:

Dear Federation of Lucanian Associations of America, my name is Rocco Benedetto, I am originally from the city of Potenza and I am involved in the teaching of English in high school as well as linguistics and dialectology.

I am writing this letter because I am working on a research doctorate at the University of Rome "Guglielmo Marconi", with the objective of investigating the degree of preservation of the Gallo-Italic dialects of Basilicata in speakers living abroad.

The galloitalic dialects of Basilicata, belonging to the municipalities of Albano di Lucania, Picerno, Pietragalla, Pignola, Potenza, Tito, Trecchina and Vaglio, were born from the fusion of local dialects with dialects spoken by people coming from Northern Italy in the Middle Ages and have been studied all over the world for a long time.

The purpose of my research project is to investigate the state of preservation of these dialects outside the regional borders, in particular among the speakers who emigrated abroad and that is why I turn to you: if there are people from these places among your associates, or if you are aware of the existence of these communities in your territory, I would be very happy if you would communicate my request, so we can establish contacts. I am at your complete disposal for any question or further clarification.

Rocco Benedetto

Anyone interested in participating can email Rocco Benedetto directly at:

r.benedetto@studenti.unimarconi.it



Geographic distribution of Gallo-Italic varieties

Here is the link to the [wiki page](#) about the dialects he is investigating.

For those interested in exploring the Crachese dialect visit the Society's [website](#) and view:

Parlë Crac'tan?

[A Guide to Speaking Cracotan](#)

NEW MEMBERS

Thomas (Elia) Iafrate—Mount Pleasant, SC

IN MEMORIAM



† *With Our Ancestors*
Frank P. Mormando, Jr.

February 6, 2022

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of "Dusty" Mormando.

An enthusiast Society member he enjoyed researching his ancestry and with his wife Rosanne and attended San Vincenzo Feasts to reconnect with his Brooklyn cousins.

His kind smile and warm personality will be missed by us whenever we gather.

HOW TO CONTACT US—COME CONTATTARCI



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