



THE CRACO SOCIETY

JUNE IN CRACO VECCHIO

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June was a busy month in Craco Vecchio. The population, moving to the rhythm of the seasons needed to address a significant agricultural milestone and also had to deal with the celebration of a church event.

In the fields there was much hard work that had to be done because the grain harvest was ready. Using only hand tools and with only the aid of a donkey or mule everyone contributed. This timeless process was repeated for hundreds of years. Scenes from the late 1960's of part of the harvesting process can be seen in the Society's DVD *Craco: Visits through Time*.

Starting with the cutting down of the sheaves of the wheat they were then tied in bundles. The bundles then were gathered and transported to a location where it would be set aside to be threshed in July.

The land also provided a reward that could be consumed in June. The first figs called "Fioroni or culummè" ripened and ready to be picked. The fig tree has 2 crops; the first (fiorini) are bigger and not as sweet and flavorful as the later ripening figs. Also, their skin tends to be tougher and thicker than those that come out later in the season. These are not as juicy or syrupy as the settembrini (autumn figs) that come out in the second crop later in the year.

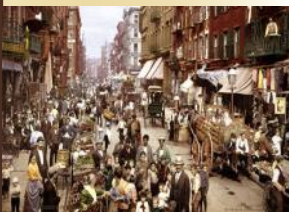
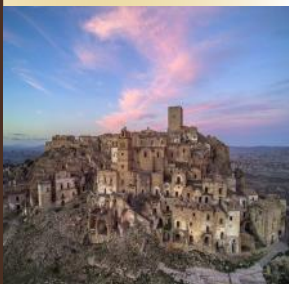
At mid-month, on June 13, the Church and the townspeople celebrated the feast of St. Anthony. The children were dressed in a monk's cloak as a devotion to St. Anthony. Small

loaves of bread, "St. Anthony's Bread," were baked and taken to the church to have them blessed, then they were given away to the poor.

Saint Anthony of Padua, was born in Portugal and became a follower of St. Francis of Assisi spending his ministry in Italy. He performed several miracles involving children and was involved in an apparition with the infant Jesus. He died on June 13, 1231. Tradition holds on the day of his death the children in the streets of the city of Padua were crying: "The saint is dead, Anthony is dead." He was canonized within a year of his death.

The city of Padua began building a large cathedral to honor him and in 1263, a child drowned near the construction site. The child's mother besought St. Anthony and promised that if her child were restored to life, she would give to the poor an amount of wheat equal to the weight of her child. Of course the child was saved, and her promise was kept creating the custom of "St. Anthony's Bread."

There is the widespread tradition of placing children under his protection right from birth. From this custom followed the tradition of dressing children in a little Franciscan habit to thank the Saint for his protection and to make it known to others.



15th Anniversary

June 1, 2022
marks the
founding of

The Craco Society

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SOCIETY CONTRIBUTES TO SHOW FEATURING CRACO

The Society was contacted by a representative from Saloon Media of Toronto Canada about assisting them with material from our archives for a film being produced about Craco.

Saloon Media is a production company specializing in factual series. Saloon's productions have appeared on several media outlets including HISTORY, AHC, National Geographic, Smithsonian Channel, Discovery ID, CMT, SBS, ZDF, Yesterday, More4, Amazon and Netflix.

Their project about Craco will be a segment in the series, "Mysteries

From Above" that shows the world from different perspectives. This new series highlights remote, hard-to-reach locations with drones exploring strange geological occurrences, unique man-made structures, curious creatures, and lost civilizations.

They will be using material from our video, [Craco Visits Through Time](#), that shows eight decades of film of the town dating back to 1929. Our full video can be viewed on our [website](#) or from [YouTube channel](#).

Saloon Media identified about 30 seconds of video from the 1963



segment of [Craco Visits Through Time](#) which complements the storyline of Mysteries From Above.

ITALIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE MONTH IN NEW YORK

The Italian Heritage and Cultural Committee of New York, Inc., announced plans for their 46th annual celebration this year in October. For 2022, twenty-six honorees were selected in celebration of this year's theme, which is:

SALUTING ITALIAN & ITALIAN AMERICAN NOBEL PRIZE LAUREATES

The theme provides a wide opportunity for research and a sound review of all that these Nobel laureates have contributed to the world from such areas as: Chemistry, Economics, Literature, Medicine, Physics, Physiology, and, most important, Peace!

Events will salute the Nobel Prize winners in special ways at various functions and activities



associated with the celebration of Italian Heritage and Culture Month in October, 2022.

COSTUMES OF LUCANIA—CRACO



*"Donna del Paese di Craco" del 1700
Raccolta fiorentina delle Gouaches (1785/1797)
Pittori: Antonio Berotti e Stefano Santucci*

Traditional costumes of Basilicata were compiled by two artists:

Antonio Berotti
and
Stefano Santucci
in
1785 and 1797.

These images show the style of dress in Craco.



"Uomo del Paese di Craco" anno 1791

THE PASSING OF A FAVORITE FRIEND—FORLINI'S

Baxter Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side, which was the home to so many of our ancestors and friends, suffered a great loss with the closing of the historic landmark—Forlini's Restaurant.

Forlini's was the home for so many of our annual San Vincenzo Feast Day gatherings in October and Reunion events held in New York City over the years.

The Forlini family, who operated the restaurant for 79 years were always kind, generous, and hospitable hosts to us. Often going out of their way to accommodate large unex-

pected crowds who showed up for the event, they graciously served us all with wonderful food and wines.

The [New York Post](#) newspaper published an article that provides an insightful background for this beloved landmark that has hosted the famous and everyday people. From politicians, sports figures, entertainers, to being a set for television and movie scenes the restaurant was a comfortable and welcoming place for all who dined there.

As we say goodbye, join us in sharing the pictures and memories of a past gathering at Forlini's five years ago.



Forlini Fun — After the service at the Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood on Baxter Street, the Society members and guests made the quick trip through the lower part of Little Italy towards the area where the first Crachesi immigrants settled to Forlini's Restaurant for a classic meal.



Representing families that included those from the Benedetto, Caputi, DeCesare, D'Elia, Francavilla, Grieco, Guariglia, LaRubbio, Lospinuso, Mastronardi, Modena, Mormando, Rinaldi, Rubertone, Salomone, Tocci, Tuzio, Vitarella clans, the group found a comfortable setting and several surprises like a variety of hot pepper and two home made limoncellos from the same recipe but with two different tastes. *Photographs courtesy of Tom Rinaldi.*



Cousins—Shown left are Fil, Leonoard, and Joe Francavilla (left to right rear) posing with their cousins Joe, Pete, and Camilla Modena.



Ready For The Feast—Photo left: Going clockwise from the lower left are Letizia Caputi (Mastronardi) Rachmiel, Paul Mannino, Rita Spero, Jackie Mannino, Domenico DeCesare, Anthony DeCesare, Roseanne DeCesare, Maria Mormando DeCesare, and William Rachmiel. Photo above: Enjoying the event are some of the Francavilla family members starting from the left, Totino Della Ragione, Maria Teresa Francavilla Della Ragione holding Antonio Della Ragione, who is sitting across from Rosa D'Elia Francavilla and Fil Francavilla.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!



A message from Joe Rinaldi, president and a founding member of The Craco Society.

What a wonderful milestone!

When we held our first meeting in Albany, NY in 2007 I recall some people commenting that we would never be able to organize a group and hold it together. Each year, I enjoy recalling those comments and marvel at what we have done to achieve our mission—preserving the history, culture, and traditions of Craco in North America.

Over the past 15 years we were able to obtain great amounts of material related to Craco that was dispersed in various public and private repositories along with personal records and mementos from individuals.

This material was compiled and as much of it as possible was added to the Society's website to make it available to anyone interested in Craco. Each month we produced a newsletter that carries stories of importance and interest about Craco's history, culture, or traditions, fulfilling our mission. The newsletters, in English and Italian are distributed to members and also posted on the website.

IN MEMORIAM



† *With Our Ancestors*

Joseph D'Italia

April 13, 2022

NEW MEMBERS

Frank P. Mormando, III—Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Besides the website we also maintain a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Through our online presence, social media, and email distribution system we reach thousands of people with the story of Craco.

Our mission also lends itself to the history of the families that make us a community. Genealogy requests and research led to the development of a Family History Database that now contains over 7,900 records of individuals going back centuries. The Database has the individuals linked so we are able to identify the many relationships and connections between us. As it is often been said about us who come from Craco, "We are all cousins." And this has proved to be the case more often than not.

With the advent of genetic testing, a new dimension was added allowing us to connect members interested in using that tool to identify our interconnected relationships to Craco cousins.

Although we consider our 15th anniversary to be a milestone, we must reflect on the earliest Crachesi in North America. They were the foundation that we are built upon. In 1901 they established a mutual aid organization, the *Società San Vincenzo Martire di Craco*, which was active until 1950, when their home parish in New York City, St. Joachim's Church was closed.

This group created the statue of San Vincenzo and brought a bone relic from Craco as a way to maintain their traditions to celebrate their patron's feast day on the fourth Sunday in October. They added a banner reflecting the symbolism of the town and saint. But most importantly, they maintained a "community" here.

Of course, this was easier with the first and second generations of Crachesi living here in close proximity to each other in New York City which we had the honor of receiving and preserving. They saw each other daily, being neighbors and working together just like in Craco. And they would share stories in their native Cracotan dialect.

We are their beneficiaries. Inheriting the responsibility for the San Vincenzo statue and relic, now at the Shrine Church of the Most Blood, we are continuing the history, culture and traditions. We have had the honor to preserve not only the physical item they created but also the mission to preserve our knowledge of Craco Vecchio and the Crachesi in North America.

Tonight, please raise a toast to our beloved Craco, all our ancestors from there that sacrificed so much for us to prosper here, and to ourselves. We have kept the memories of the old town alive and created a way for future generations will know about our beloved heritage and roots.



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