



Crachese Life in 1920s New York

The 1920s was a decade of change for New York City and the Crachesi living there. By 1925 New York was the largest city in the world but life there was influenced by Prohibition and a period of prosperity and cultural change known as the “Roaring 20s”.

National prohibition provided lucrative illegal markets which some Italian Americans exploited. During the 1920s, the “gangster” image of Italians, exemplified by Al Capone, was perpetuated in films and popular literature. Meanwhile the majority of second generation Italian-Americans worked hard displaying many of the hallmarks of children of immigrants. They held largely blue-collar occupations, were underrepresented in schools, tied to Little Italy residences, and attracted to in-group marriages. This applied to the Crachesi in New York too.

After their service in WWI, Antonio Spera and Frank Muzio (see October 2013 Newsletter) returned home to New York. Antonio went back to his barber trade, married Camilla Camperlengo (b. Craco 1898) in 1921 and had three daughters over the next six years. Frank Muzio stayed and traveled in Europe after being dismissed from the Army but returned to open a cafeteria on Franklin and Centre Streets in Manhattan by 1922.

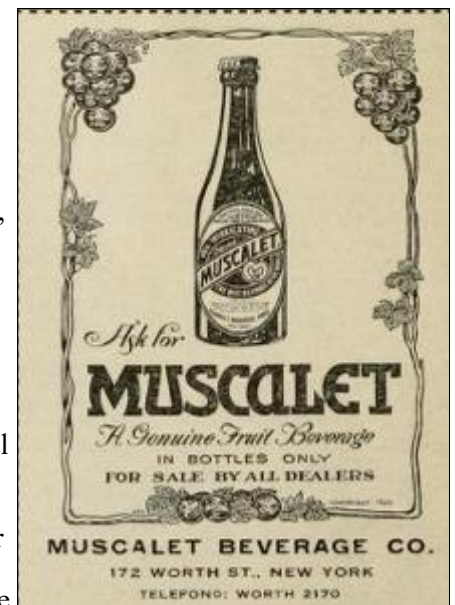
Domenico Colabella (see April 2013 Newsletter) returned to Italy in 1915 and served with the national police force in the war zone where he received several decorations. In 1920 he returned to New York, marrying Carmela Parziale in 1921, and had three sons by 1928.

Some Cracotan entrepreneurs were challenged by changes brought by Prohibition but responded with resilience. Giuseppe Rinaldi (b. 1877 Craco), was involved in running saloons with Salvatore Grieco and Antonio Grossi along with

“Cracotan entrepreneurs were challenged by changes from Prohibition but responded with resilience.”

running a wine distributing business prior to 1920. With an end of legal liquor sales, he went into the soda bottling business distributing a brand called “Muscalet Soda” throughout the city.

Domenico Rinaldi (b. 1902 Craco, see August 2013 Newsletter) closed his Stone Front Bar & Grill that was located in Washington Market and went into the paper stock business. Those who were already in the trade did well in this decade with the national prosperity creating a demand for paper.



Advertisement for Muscalet Soda, published in “Il Carroccio” an Italian review magazine published in New York City until 1928.

Antonio Camperlengo, by this time a well known fighter known as “Italian Joe Gans” (see October 2013 Newsletter) also worked for his fight manager at the Adonis Social Club as the “floor manager.” The club, formed after WWI by Italian and Irish veterans, was taken over by criminal elements divided into rival groups struggling for control of the Brooklyn waterfront. On Dec. 25, 1925 this struggle came to a head at an event there.

San Vincenzo's Tailor

After the completion of the 122nd Feast of San Vincenzo in New York City, the story of how the statue at Most Precious Blood was made surfaced. This story ends speculation about the origins of the statue and perhaps provides insight into how the banner from the Società San Vincenzo Martire di Craco was made.

Rosa D'Elia Francavilla previously shared a story about her great grandfather Pasquale Marrese making the clothing for the statue. Rosa's mother, Maria Teresa Tuzio was the daughter of Giuseppe Tuzio and Rosa Marrese who were married in Craco in 1902. Rosa Marrese's father, Pasquale Marrese (born 1846 Craco, died 1914 Jersey City, NJ) had emigrated to the US in the 1880s and was a mainstay of the Crachese community in New York City.

Pasquale brought his tailoring skills to America and established a shop at 53 Spring St., Manhattan (see May 2013 Newsletter, pg.1). He also encountered both tragedy (June 2013 Newsletter, pg. 3) and also success as one of the founders of the Società San Vincenzo Martire di Craco, an organization he helped create to aid his paesani immigrants. As an incorporator and Director of the Società in 1899 he set a course for the organization that would support the Cracotan community in New York for the next 50 years.

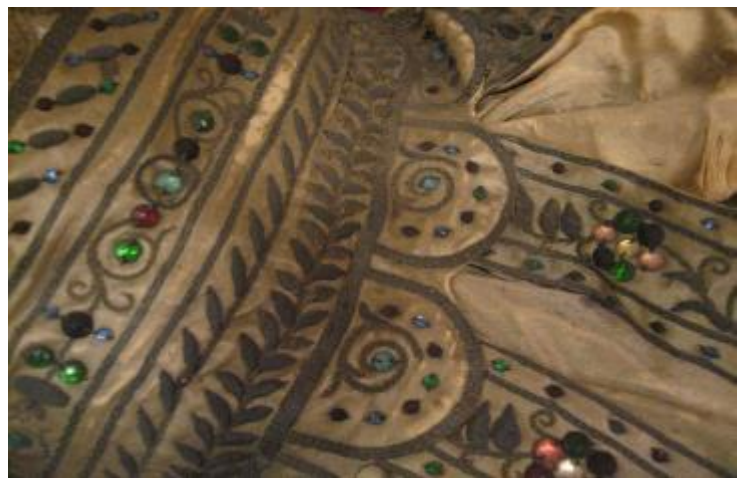
By 1899, he had moved his household from 221 Mulberry St. to Jersey City, NJ but continued to maintain his tailor shop in New York. In 1901 when the Società San Vincenzo Martire di Craco entered into a contract with St. Joachim's Church to provide a statue of San Vincenzo and a relic of the saint, considerable coordination and work was required. This may explain why it took two years from the organization's founding to arrange to install the statue and relic in the church.

Pasquale Marrese's role becomes even more important as we learn from his great-granddaughter that he was responsible for sewing the clothing on the statue in New York. It makes great sense that a Crachese, with tailoring skills would be involved in creating the statue of San Vincenzo in New York in 1900.

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Pasquale Marrese & Maria Ferrante—Married in Craco in 1870. They arrived in New York City in 1890 and were mainstays of the community.



Loving Details—Above is a closeup photograph showing the details, jewels and intricate stitching that make up the clothing on the statue. Left is a segment from the banner of the Società San Vincenzo Martire di Craco showing similar detail. This leads to speculation that he also fabricated the banner of the Società. The crest, sewn into the center of the banner, contains many symbolic elements related to Craco including the stemma.

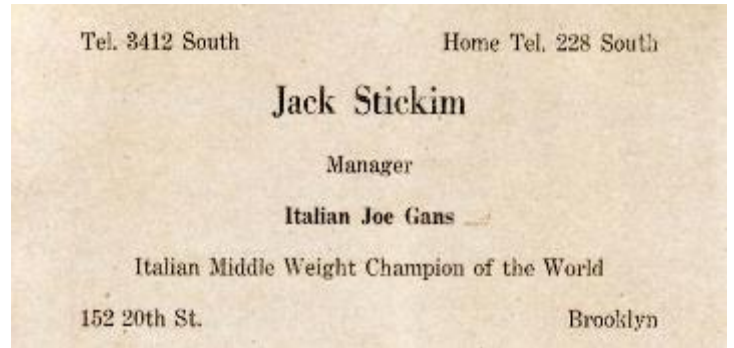
Images of 122nd Feast of San Vincenzo in NY



Crachese Life in 1920s New York *continued from page 1*

Frankie Yale and his associate Al Capone, who was in New York getting medical treatment for his son, were hosting a holiday party at the club. When members of their rival faction arrived words were exchanged by the two groups. Then the lights went out and shots were fired. When the police arrived, three men were found dead and arrests were made including Al Capone. The next day everyone was released and no one was ever prosecuted for the crime.

With improving economic conditions the Crachesi benefited and used their gains to move from the tenements in Little Italy to other New York Boroughs primarily in Brooklyn and Queens. During this era, as the second generation began to come of age, many new families were formed. Some made trips to Craco to visit including newlyweds like Mildred Rinaldi and Joseph Benedetto who traveled there in 1929 taking home movies of Craco. Little did anyone suspect the challenges they would face in the next two decades. ■



Jack Stickim was Giacomo Stabile, the manager for Italian Joe Gans (Antonio Camperlengo). The address on the business card was the location of the Adonis Social Club, which Stickim owned and Italian Joe Gans worked as the “floor manager.” The club was the scene of a Christmas Day 1925 incident that included Al Capone who had grown up in Brooklyn.

San Vincenzo’s Tailor *continued from page 2*

Relying on his memory of the statue’s clothing in Craco and perhaps the woodcut of the saint that was brought to America by the immigrants, he lovingly fabricated the statue’s intricate and bejeweled clothing. More than likely he also

created the statue’s body using a mannequin. With the extensive detail some of the work was also done by fellow Cracotans who were employed at his shop. ■



Secret of the Clothing—Above left is the woodcut image available in America of San Vincenzo in 1899. Above right is the statue made by Pasquale Marrese in 1901. The details are strikingly similar suggesting the role the woodcut may have played in creating the statue.



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