

Basilicata Spies in the US Civil War?

As we explore the Basilicata immigration history to America, Tom Frascella, Esq., president of the San Fele Society of New Jersey, shares an interesting story connecting an ancestor to intrigue during the US Civil War. This was a period of turmoil in the US and Italy as political forces struggled for control in both countries.

The BASILICATÈ Exhibition project reached the second phase last month with the selection of winning recipes that represent Lucania in Argentina, Uruguay, and the US. The making of these dishes was filmed in the three countries and will become part of the Exhibition display in the summer.

The winning recipes in New York represent those passed down through families from Craco, Pescopagano, and Pomarico along with a recipe from Bernalda provided by celebrity chef Mauro Castano. What is wonderful about the winners is they are sixth and seventh generation descendants from Basilicata immigrants. Their ancestors instilled in them the traditions the BASILICATÈ Exhibition is trying to present. Although during the 140 years or more in America, most descendants of Italian immigrants lost the native language and dialects to the assimilation process, but the culture, recipes, and traditions were not.

The next phases of the BASILICATÈ Exhibition project will focus on language with the reading of the poetry of Rocco Scotellaro. There will also be a focus on the houses of Lucanians in the three countries to see what has been retained from the culture. Many of the everyday things in our homes, which have connections to Basilicata are taken for granted, yet are symbols of connection to the region.

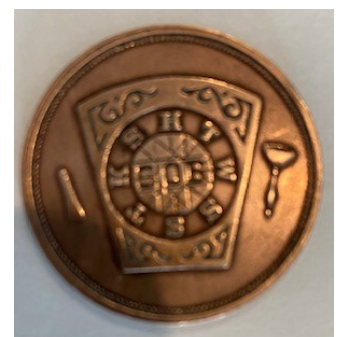
“Although during the 140 years or more in America, most descendants of Italian immigrants lost the native language and dialects to the assimilation process, but the culture, recipes, and traditions were not.”

The BASILICATÈ Exhibition now has a footprint on the Internet with social media sites (see page 6).

Also occurring last month was the release of a new book about the noted New York City educator, Leonard Covello. Carmen Petruzzi, who brought Covello's accomplishment to the Society, and has published extensively, added this new book to her long list of material. (See page 6)

The activities surrounding the BASILICATÈ Exhibition project, the initiative by the Federazione Lucana d'America and those of collaborating member societies, institutions, and private companies is building a foundation to make the world aware of Basilicata and what it has to offer. It is exciting to share in this as it makes our mission more of an imperative for those of us who are connected to Craco and Lucania. ■

Discover ~ Share ~ Preserve



What is the importance of this coin? See page 2.

Basilicata: Emigration to the U.S. 1851-1863

By: Hon. Thomas P. Frascella, M.ed, J.D.

I am writing on behalf of the San Fele Society of New Jersey. As one of the oldest Basilicata American heritage groups in the United States we take seriously our responsibility to preserve and promote our Italian cultural history and American immigration narrative.

Most published southern Italian emigration narratives tend to start in the mid-1880's. Our ancestral research, family oral

histories, and community documents, both here and in Italy, all confirm that "substantial" migration and emigration initially commenced from Basilicata in the early 1850's.

We hope that the story that follows will expand our common knowledge and respect for the sacrifices and trials that our Basilicata ancestors made, whenever undertaken, in their journey to the Americas.

Part II: 1862-The Start of the Basilicata Immigrant Community in Trenton and The San Fele Americas List

By October 1860 Garibaldi and his irregular volunteer army had forced the Bourbon King to abandon his Capitol at Naples and retreat to the northwest corner of his kingdom. The reign of the Bourbon King and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was drawing to an end. At that moment King Victor Emanuel arrived with his northern army. He took charge for the final thrust under the guise of protecting the Papacy in order to prevent any excuse from France or Austria to become involved in this Italian war. Once on scene with his army Victor Emanuel unceremoniously dismissed Garibaldi from the field and dismissed most of his irregulars sending them back to their homes. Within a month or two he dismissed all of the volunteer irregulars and from this point on southern Italy was under the control of the "northern" Italian army. It may well be that the King did not trust an irregular armed force that had turned on their southern King and so did not incorporate them into the regular army. Also, Victor Emanuel and his advisors were concerned with the southern troops' loyalty to Garibaldi and pro-republican leanings. In any event these volunteers peacefully returned to their homes and voted overwhelmingly for unification a few months after their dismissal from the conflict.

But Garibaldi, now a "civilian" wasn't ready to give up on the Carbonari dream of a united Italy that included the Vatican States. In November-December 1861 a first national Italian convention of Masonic Lodges was held in Naples. The Masonic Lodge membership had long been outlawed in Italy but its membership was the core of the Carbonari national movement. At the convention the Masonic delegates elected as their first national Grandmaster, Garibaldi. During the Italian convention Masonic lodge members from the United States' Lincoln Administration secretly reached out to Garibaldi for support in helping sway British public opinion against challenging the Union's naval blockade of Confederate ports. The Union was not doing well in the Civil war and English textile interests were lobbying the British government to break the Union shipping blockade of the south in order to import cotton. Lincoln wanted Garibaldi to endorse what was then being considered in secret, a

proclamation declaring all slaves in secessionist States as contraband to be freed. The Lincoln administration argued this would be an act that "freed" the slaves. They wanted Garibaldi's endorsement to help sway the British public's anti-slavery opinion in order to gain support for the Union cause as "anti-slavery" thereby making it politically unfavorable for the British to break the blockade. Garibaldi was a very popular freedom fighter and hero to the English public at the time.

Garibaldi and the Italian Masonic convention delegates initially declined their support. Garibaldi and the Italian Masonic membership were, on the issue of slavery, pure abolitionists. They felt the proclamation as proposed did not go far enough and was based on the right of government to confiscate property not the right to individual civil liberty. Secret correspondence between the Lincoln Administration and Garibaldi trying to get him to agree to endorse the proposal continued throughout 1862. History records that Garibaldi after protesting finally agreed to the endorsement as a necessary compromise in 1863. It was Garibaldi by letter to the English press that introduced the British public to what was then called the Emancipation Proclamation. With Garibaldi's endorsement the Proclamation was announced creating the desired effect on the English public and insuring that the British navy did not disrupt the Union blockade.

While a great deal of internal political maneuvering was taking place in Italy in 1862 and 1863 it would not seem like the American Civil War had much to do with it. However, our Trenton, New Jersey documents from this time and family oral histories create some puzzling statements and facts that suggest otherwise. We do admit that substantial gaps in the information are limiting us to have a full picture. However, we think it is an interesting story to share.

Trenton 1862

Part of our local emigration puzzle is that, following the Masonic Convention in Naples at the end of 1861, a young twenty-one year old man from San Fele by the name of Vito Frascella boarded a ship in Naples with the destination of the port of New York. [Full disclosure I am one of many direct descendants of Vito.] He left behind a young wife and a one year old son. No reason for his departure even to his family has ever been established.

continued on page 3

Basilicata: Emigration to the U.S. 1851-1863

continued from page 2

Upon arriving in New York City our records state that he met with another young Italian who had been living and working there already by the name of Arsenio Episcopo. There is no indication that the two knew each other prior to this meeting but Episcopo was also a native of the Basilicata region.

From New York, Vito immediately travelled alone to Morristown, NJ and met with Carlo Sista another young Italian from San Fele who had already been living and working in Morristown. Obviously Episcopo and Sista had emigrated to the U.S. at some time earlier than 1861 but we do not have an exact date.

From Morristown, Vito travelled alone to Trenton, NJ where he rented a room at 118 Market St. It is interesting that the community preserved his movements in that much detail as if they were important. Apparently he stayed in Trenton alone for a week. The Trenton community has no record of any other Italian living in Trenton when Vito arrived. In that first week Vito somehow acquired an 1858 Masonic Penny from the Three Times Three Masonic Lodge No. 5 in the City.

Family oral history says he carried that coin with him the rest of his life. The family thought it important enough to preserve the coin and to pass the coin down through four generations after his death.



The Masonic Penny

My understanding is that carrying the coin is some indication of membership in the Masonic Lodge. Family oral tradition says Vito was a member of the Italian Masonic Lodge system but Italians made a point of not recording membership rolls. Masonic records trace the American Masonic Lodge system establishment to 1730 and Trenton.

About a week later Carlo and Arsenio travelled to Trenton taking rooms together but separate from Vito. Our Society and all Trenton Italian-American publications over the past one hundred and fifty plus years view the arrival in Trenton of these three men in 1862 as the beginning of both the Basilicata community and Italian American community in the City.

Over the course of the next year or so the men reported in interviews that they gave over the years that they travelled between New York, Trenton, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Curiously when interviewed as to what they were doing in the Baltimore area in 1862 they would say they were working on a union war project as "hod" carriers. A hod carrier is laborer for masons or bricklayers. They carry the bricks and mortar on the job site to the masons. Maybe they were laborers, I can't say, but manual labor was not consistent with what these men did in later years. Also of interest is the full quote they made was that they were hod carriers but the Americans had to show them what bricks and mortar was. An odd statement for an Italian.

After about a year Vito returned to Italy in 1863. That would have been after the Emancipation Proclamation was announced and endorsed by Garibaldi. It is speculation of course, but the correspondence between the U.S. State Department and Garibaldi during 1862 thru early 1863 needed to be kept secret from Confederate and British agents. At the same time correspondence from America to Garibaldi was complicated as he was on the move in Sicily and southern Italy planning a campaign against the Vatican States. Obviously some secure system was needed to protect the correspondence chain.

Were these three men a part of that network? Were they acting as a Basilicata political cell? While there is no way to tell, family oral histories say Vito took the time while in Baltimore and Washington to keep apprised of the anti-slavery, pro-Union politics so the subject interested him. We were told in family discussions that he was impressed by Lincoln after attending several of Lincoln's speeches in Washington. However, Vito's admiration of Lincoln, from what we were told, was not of the impression given of the physical Lincoln or of the Office of the Presidency but rather of the content of his speeches and Lincoln's dedication to the principles of Liberty. This would later translate in his insistence that all of his children after immigration register as Republicans, the party of Lincoln.

By the time of Vito's 1863 arrival in Italy, Garibaldi had been severely wounded and imprisoned by Italian federal troops as he attempted to raise an army in the south to invade the Papal States. Further, the government had ordered the volunteers that served with Garibaldi in the south to report to prison. I think that this was out of concern they would rally to the imprisoned Garibaldi. When some didn't report to jail, the federal government imposed the Pica laws and the era of the Briganti began in Basilicata. It was then according to family oral histories that Vito decided to actually emigrate with his family to the U.S. Vito was done with Italian politics as he felt the rest of his life that the principles he believed in had been betrayed.

continued on page 4

Basilicata: Emigration to the U.S. 1851-1863

continued from page 3

The San Fele Americas List 1862

San Fele produced an interesting 30-plus year series of documents starting in 1862 regarding individual emigration from San Fele to the Americas. These detailed lists, (I have not seen them all), are of residents of the town who immigrated mostly to New York, Argentina, and Uruguay. As far as I know no other town in Basilicata kept such detailed official lists for such an extensive time. The 1862 list, being the first is a little different than the rest. Later lists give departure dates for groups of people within the year as they left. The 1862 list looks like it was composed at the end of October and is just a list of all those who left for the Americas in the past year without stating precisely when. The questions arise why were the lists kept, and why did the departure list start Oct. 26, 1862? It should also be noted that the lists were kept for departures only and there were no lists kept for repatriations.

The 1862 list records 37 departures for that year, with destinations which include all three countries, U.S., Argentina, and Uruguay. By my count 15 of the 37 were going to New York or about forty per cent, most were family units, husband, wife, and children, not individuals. I think that thirty-seven people emigrating as far as the Americas is a significant number that early and from a town as small as San Fele. If it is indicative of what was happening in surrounding Basilicata towns, it is indeed a very significant number. Additionally, the lists are probably indicators of the percentage of people going to each destination during this early Basilicata emigration. These lists suggest that the numbers of people emigrating are far greater in the 1860-1880 period than other studies estimate. Also, the organization and movements from start to destination seem to be far better coordinated than many might assume. This is not surprising to us as we can see from just the San Fele American community start dates in New York City, Trenton, Newark, and Buffalo, NY that these early immigrants knew exactly where they wanted to go. Also, many of these early communities are built and coordinated around specific work opportunities, especially railroad related work.

I would also like to note that the first time I encountered a reference to these San Fele Americas lists was a summary article regarding the stoppage of Italian immigration in 1930

by Fascist controlled Italy. Apparently Italian sociologists in the 1920's reviewed these lists. It gave them unique access to the "cultural and social effects" of mass multigenerational emigration rather than just being limited to data regarding one generation from 1890-1920. Sixty plus years of data permitted them to speculate on cultural changes they were seeing in Basilicata that were not common yet in other parts of Italy.

While I have a number of thoughts of why the lists were originally made that is a discussion for another day as it is related to the next chapter in Basilicata emigration. That chapter is related to the severe implementation of the Pica laws in Basilicata which ushered in the Briganti era ultimately forcing thousands out in a new round of survival migration.

Additional information about this material is available on the [San Fele Society of New Jersey](#). ■



Frascella Family Cemetery Monument

Reminder:

Your should have received your 2024 membership dues notice.
Please submit your payment, the Society relies on you for support.



How to contact us - Come contattarci

The Craco Society
14 Earl Road
East Sandwich, MA 02537 USA

EMAIL: memberservices@thecracosociety.org



VISIT: www.thecracosociety.org

BASILICATÈ Exhibition Recipe Winners

On February 3rd the three winning recipes from the USA for the BASILICATÈ Exhibition were announced. They represented very traditional dishes from the Region but reflected changes that occurred over time and in a new country. These dishes showcase Basilicata's cuisine to the world, emphasizing the cultural richness that has been preserved through the generations. The unique interpretations of these regional recipes play a crucial role in the BASILICATÈ Exhibition narrative, highlighting the enduring legacy of our ancestors.

The winners were:

- Scarcella, prepared by Brianna Uricchio using the recipe as done in Pomarico
- Cecirotti, made by G. and Johnny Cherichello, using the family recipe from Pescopagano
- Cicerata (Struffoli) by Jessica Petraro from the preparation as done in Craco.

The winners enjoyed a celebratory event on February 21 at the Italian Cultural Institute in Manhattan. It featured Cristina Armenta, representing the BASILICATÈ Exhibition team presenting an update on the project and a display of the winners and their recipes. She was joined by Fabio Finotti, Director, [Istituto Italiano di Cultura di New York](#), Anthony Julian Tamburri Ph.D, Dean, [John D. Calandra Italian American Institute](#).

The following day, the winners met at [Carlo's Bakery](#) in Hoboken, New Jersey to film the making of their recipes. They were hosted by Mauro Castano, General Manager and celebrity star of The Cake Boss television series.

Mauro made his version of [Pizza Rustica](#), as made in Bernalda and then [Brianna Uricchio](#) showed her preparation of the dish as made in Pomarico.

Then [G. and Johnny Cherichello](#), using the family recipe from Pescopagano made Cecirotti.

The final session was with [Jessica Petraro and her sons and daughters: Paul, Luke, John, James, Gianna and Mia](#), making Cicerata as done in Craco.



Mauro Castano

The winners represent a wonderful expression of Lucanian culture in the US. The BASILICATÈ Exhibition planners originally anticipated historic recipes being presented by "Nonne." But here in the US, the Nonne did their job already, passing the recipes on along with the love of traditions from the region to the six or more generations that have grown up in America. Although they are now far removed from Basilicata, the American generations have Lucania in their hearts and minds. ■

These traditional Lucanian dishes are known by different names depending on where they are from.



Scarcella (or Scarcedda) a version of Pizza Rustica can be called, U pastizz, a 'Ngoronatè, or Torta salata. Just like the names of the dish, the ingredients used in the different towns, villages, and even families also vary. This very flavorful dish is mainly prepared during the Easter holiday season.



Cecirotti, Calzoncelli, Bocconotti, or Panzerottè is made with either sweet chick pea or chestnut filling as a typical Christmas season dish.



Cicerata, is also known in some parts of Basilicata as Purcidduzzè, and in other regions as Struffoli or Cicerchiata. It is a dish prepared for the Christmas holidays.

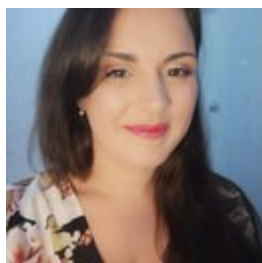
BASILICATÈ

YOUR RECIPE, YOUR STORY

BASILICATÈ Recipes

- ✓ Brianna Uricchio with Scarcella from Pomarico, joined by Mauro Castano with Pizza Rustica from Bernalda
- ✓ G. and Johnny Cherichello with Cecirotti from Pescopagano
- ✓ Jessica Petraro and children with Cicerata from Craco

Leonard Covello - Book

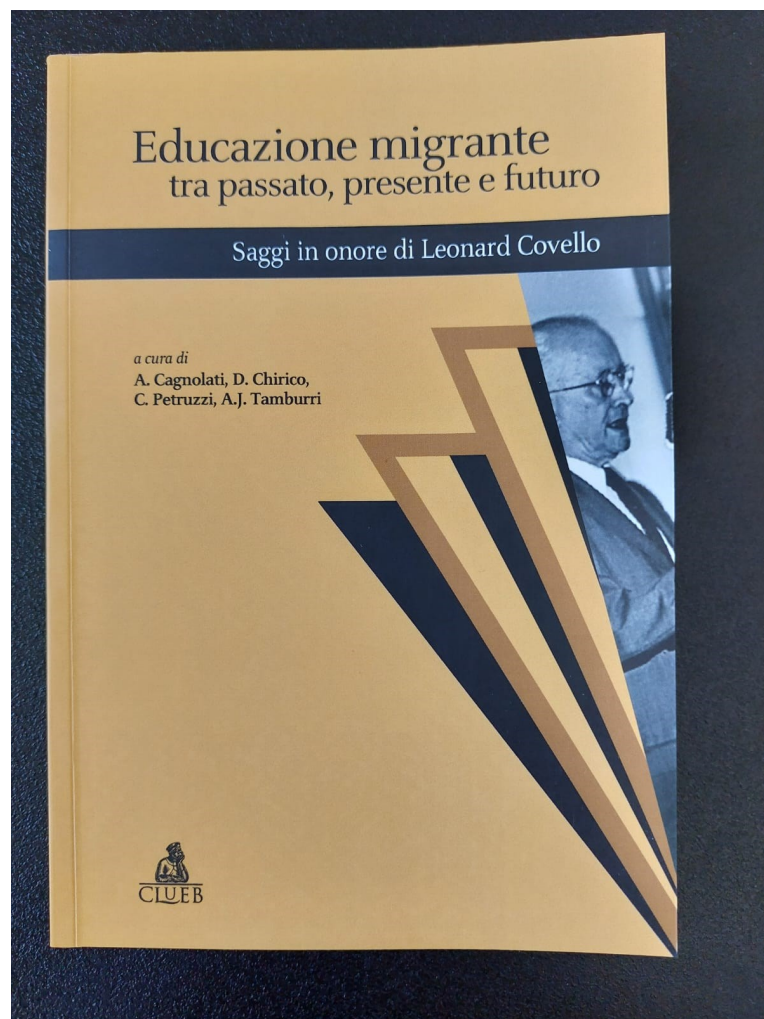


The book, “Educazione migrante tra passato, presente e futuro. Saggi in onore di Leonard Covello,” a collaboration including Carmen Petrucci, has just been published.

Carmen, who provided material about Covello and his contributions in earlier Society Newsletters, was an

Inaugural Fellow at the Queens College Library (NY) in collaboration with the [John D. Calandra Italian American Institute](#), and with the support of James J. Periconi. The research fellowship program defrays costs for scholars to conduct research with the collection over a period of two to four weeks. Carmen was in New York in the Fall of 2023 for her research.

Carmen Petrucci is a postgraduate research fellow at the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University of Foggia. She received a Bachelor's degree in Modern Literature, a Master's degree in Modern Philology and another in Science of Education. In 2022, she passed the national competitive examination as a teacher of Italian and History at High School. She obtained her PhD in April 2019 at the University of Florence and immediately afterwards she perfected her knowledge of qualitative and quantitative methods in a one-year internship in New York between the summer of 2019 and the summer of 2020. She currently collaborates with Antonella Cagnolati, Full Professor of History of Education and Comparative Education at the University of Foggia. She has always been interested in migration with a specific focus on the effects in children's life histories and projects. Since 2020 she has been working on the reconstruction of educational processes within the broader topic of the history of Italian emigration. Her research investigation intends to illuminate the lesser-known path of autonomy and independence achieved between the late 19th and early 20th century, particularly by the second generations



who filled the educational gap between the parent's generation and long-standing American residents. The list of Carmen's publications can be found at [ResearchGate](#). ■

Follow the BASILICATÈ Exhibition

The BASILICATÈ Exhibition now has a presence on the internet with social media sites. Follow the developments of the project on Facebook and Instagram at:

FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554848313452>

INSTAGRAM:

<https://www.instagram.com/basilicate.2024/>

Information and details: segreteria@lucaninelmondo.org

