



The First Photographs of Craco

“The Society benefitted in 2016 from the acquisition of photographs of Craco taken by Cav. Vincenzo Simone. The thirty-one images of Craco dating back to the 1920s are the first known photographs of the town.”

The beauty and history of Craco continues to fascinate the world. Although it wasn't until the 1920s that the first photographs of the town were taken, since then there has been continuous capture of the images Craco offers. The imagery was made by artists, photographers, film makers and citizens trying to capture their heritage.

The most recent example of this interest is Craco is seen in a new documentary, “CRACO IL RESPIRO DELLA MEMORIA - L'eredità di un borgo sospeso nel tempo” (CRACO THE BREATH OF MEMORY - The Legacy of a Village Suspended in Time) on [YouTube](#).

Through 3D computer graphics, Craco is reconstructed from its foundation to the present day. The English translation of the Italian narration can be accessed by selecting “translate” in the browser and then selecting “Show Transcript”, which will display the English in a sidebar.

It was just about 100 years ago that the first photographs of Craco were taken. They were taken by Cav. Vincenzo Simone as part of a business venture to sell postcards of the town (see page 3). These images, familiar to many, represent important historic material preserving scenes of Craco that no longer exist.

This month we again share a reflection of Craco by Anna Trianni (page 2) that tells of the melancholy of those in Craco who went through the Frana experience. ■



Cavaliere Vincenzo Simone and his colored postcard of Craco.



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Craco Reflections

THE VIGIL

I have been here forever (so to speak), watching from the heights of my hilltop as time flows by, as the seasons march on relentlessly, one after another, waiting.

Waiting? (You might ask for what?) That someday, someone might remember me.

For years, I have waited for this to happen, and now I can say that perhaps the wait is over, and it wasn't in vain—someone has remembered me.

I am weary of being alone and abandoned, of living in unbroken silence, of not seeing life bustling through my narrow streets, of no longer hearing the joyful voices of children.

For centuries, I delighted in all of this. I witnessed the ebb and flow of good times and bad across the millennia, but I was alive, strong, steadfast, happy in the belief that this could never end.

I watched my “people” with joy, but then suddenly, as so often happens, everything changed. I began to falter, to

waver, to lose the strength I once had.

That alone was enough to tear apart my foundations—but more than that, it broke the hearts of my people. I stood helpless as I watched them, one after another, leave behind their homes, their memories, and a piece of their hearts, sadness etched into their souls.

I was left utterly alone, enveloped in a silence I had never known before, thinking and rethinking that it all began in a distant December of 1963.

And yet, despite everything, I witness the passing of time, the storms, the neglect. Even in my diminished state, I am still “alive.” I hear the voices of my people returning, cheerful and celebratory, to my streets, bringing life back as it was in those golden days.

I know this will happen—just as the phoenix rises from its ashes, I will rise from my ruins. I say only this to my people: believe in this, and never forget that I am here, waiting for you, like a father anxiously awaiting the return of his children.

Anna Triani



Craco 1920s—The view of Craco Vecchio above is among the Simone Collection and dates from the earliest of the images. The black and white photographs were often hand colored to create post cards that were sold in the town's shops (see the image on the following page).

Craco: From the Lens of the Simone Family

The Society benefitted in 2016 from the acquisition of photographs of Craco taken by Cav. Vincenzo Simone. The thirty-one images of Craco dating back to the 1920s are the first known photographs of the town.

The Craco photographs are part of a collection of images of Southern Italy housed in the Pinacoteca "Corrado Giaquinto" gallery at the Città Metropolitana di Bari. During the 1980s, the museum purchased the collection from the Simone family. Cav. Simone was born in Gravina di Puglia, Bari in 1892 and died there in 1968 but spent years photographing Southern Italian towns and landscapes.

The entire collection consisting of about 14,000 glass plates, were used for the printing of postcards depicting Southern Italian towns, primarily in Puglia and Basilicata. The Craco images will be familiar to many because of their use as postcards. The details about the dates and locations of the images are not available but observation suggests they are from the late 1920s and continue through the 1960s.

The digital images received by the Society, were made from Simone's original photographic glass plates. They are startling in their clarity and enable enlargements that show

incredible details. Glass plates were far superior to film negatives for research quality imaging because they were extremely stable and less likely to bend or distort. Especially in large-format frames in wide-field imaging as Simone used them, making resulting negatives ideal for postcard printing. All the images are in black and white. However, to make them more appealing Simone began to use hand coloring to enhance the postcards that were sold in local stores in each town.

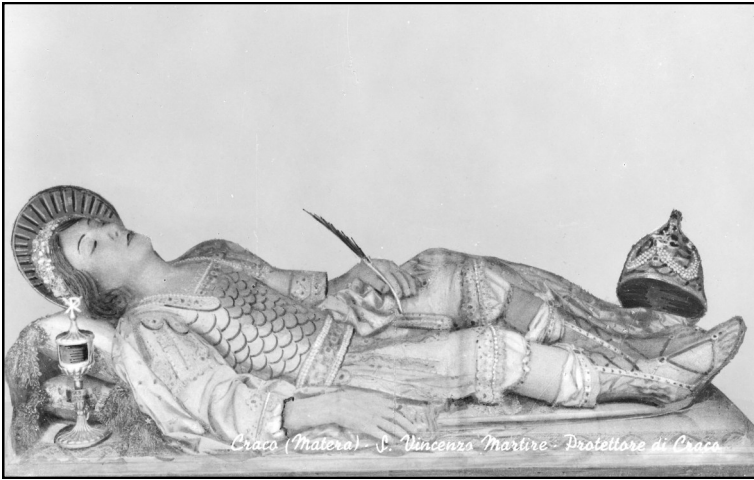
After WWII, Cav. Simone was joined in his business by his son, Arnaldo (called Aldo). Aldo was responsible for the photographs of Craco taken during the 1960s.

The images the Simone family made of Craco represent an insight into the town and life there that is irreplaceable. As we shall see in subsequent newsletter editions many cherished locations that are now gone, continue to exist in the images. ■



Craco Postcard—The photograph from Craco Vecchio (from previous page) was hand colored and sold as a postcard (above). Simone was creative, combining two images to create additional postcard scenes (see page 4 for an example).

Craco: From the Lens of the Simone Family *continued*



Evolution—The two images above show how Cav. Simone used an image to issue a postcard and then combined images to make a new postcard. Then, later in the evolution of his business he added coloring and created another postcard as shown on page 1.



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