



# The Craco Society

DISCOVER. SHARE. PRESERVE. | SCOPRIRE. CONDIVIDERE. CONSERVARE.



## The America the First Crachesi Found

Italian immigration grew ten-fold in the 1880s over previous decades. In 1880 about twenty-thousand Italians lived in New York City but their numbers would increase more than twelve times by 1900. While Italian immigration was dispersed throughout the United States large numbers of Southern Italians arriving in New York City from the regions of Basilicata, Calabria, and Sicily settled on the Lower East Side. Included in this were small groups from Craco (41 people from 1880-1890 and 380 people between 1891-1900).

Conditions in New York City in the 1880s were horrible for them. Forced to live in a slum area known as "Mulberry Bend," the Italians arriving there were following earlier immigrants from Ireland and Germany. They lived in dark, airless, and unsanitary tenements. Tenement buildings were dangerous firetraps, as well as a breeding place for rodents and diseases. They did not have easy access to water, especially if they lived on the upper level. Water had to be drawn from the fire hydrant in the street and carted upstairs.

Lacking English, marked by their dialects, and often not able to write, Italians were reliant on "middlemen" (padrones) who placed men for work but extracted fees and commissions. Italian immigrants tended to do whatever was needed to support themselves, accepting jobs that other Americans didn't want to do. To maintain their families they worked 12 hours a day and often took in boarders to cover expenses.

With their agrarian experience, Southern Italians were able to get the maximum from everything extracting from dumps, trash in the streets, and cast-offs of others to create riches that allowed him to return home or bring his family over to join him. Jacob Riis, in his 1890 book, "How The Other Half Lives" documented the lives that immigrants of the era faced and made an observation important to Cracotans.

*"... there is money in New York's ash-barrel... [it] has become the exclusive preserve of the Italian immigrant ..."*

Referring to Italians being resourceful, he may have identified the roots of how the paper stock business became important to many from Craco. He says, "*The discovery was made ... there is money in New York's ash-barrel ... it has become the exclusive preserve of the Italian immigrant ... The city hired gangs of men ... The men were paid a dollar and a half a day, kept what they found ...*"

He goes on to say the arrangement changed, suggesting that "junk picking" became very profitable: "*Today Italians contract for the work, paying large sums to be permitted to do it ... The effect ... giving him exclusive control of the one industry ...*"

Many Italians were lured by stories told in Europe about plentiful work and big wages, in America but could not find steady work and returned to Italy discouraged and with empty pockets. Early Italian immigrants were not welcomed in America; they would be verbally abused by name calling such as "wop," "guinea," and "dago."

In the face of such hostility, Italian immigrants, disregarded differences, and preferences for local townspeople (paesani) drew together, mingling language, worship, and traditions, creating a sense of security among themselves. By establishing their own communities where they could speak their own language, eat their own foods, practice their customs and religion as if back in their homeland, numerous "Little Italy" neighborhoods developed.

Over the 1880s the gains of the immigrants set the stage for the even larger number of arrivals during the next decade. For the Crachesi, the initial group of immigrants who arrived brought with them skills (barbers, tailors) that aided in their assimilation and provided the pathway for others to follow in the next decade. ■

# Craco Immigrants' Trip

The first Crachesi immigrants faced considerable challenges but established the pathway and foundation for more than 1500 others that followed in the next 40 years.

Understanding both the difficulty they faced and the desperation that drove them to leave may not be fully possible by us today. Thinking about how easily we travel and how the world has changed prevents us from grasping the impact of immigration on their lives. In going to America they faced daily challenges of not knowing the language, being unable to read any signs, dealing with unusual food, customs, and religion and realizing they were not welcomed by most of the populace.

The moment they left Craco their world changed. Prof. D'Angella, the author of the history of Craco, says their travel to Naples was 8 to 10 days by horse to cover the distance of about 160 miles. Some made the trip by using the "chooch" or donkey probably pulling a cart. Later immigrants would have had the choice of using the train reducing the travel time and risks. The route they traveled was from Craco towards Pisticci Scalo, then along the Cavone River Valley until they connected with the Via Appia through Potenza, Salerno, and into Naples. This was a hard and dangerous trip due to what were described as "gypsies" and brigands by Prof. D'Angella. He adds, "Many people would have written a will before embarking on the trip."

Arriving in Naples added to their dislocation by introducing the villagers to the more modern aspects of their world. For most, this trip was the first experience of leaving the area surrounding Craco. Bear in mind, there was a Cracotan proverb that described something far away as being "from here to Pisticci ..." which is only a distance of 11 miles.

Arriving in Naples was an eye opener. There may have been more people living in one Naples apartment block than in all of Craco! Naples in this era was the largest city in Italy. Such a large bustling city framed by an active volcano had to create an overwhelming impression. Then the emigrants from Craco had to deal with new challenges. Needing to secure passage on a ship, comply with the documentation required to leave Italy, and meet U.S. regulations in order to be permitted to board, they were forced to rely on agents.

Fares for steerage class passengers, in the 1880s were about \$20 but with increasing competition among shipping lines the price would drop in half by the 1890s. Most likely, their possessions were wrapped as bundles and included food such as dried sausage or cheese. Once they boarded the ship they entered a totally alien place. The ocean voyage was rarely smooth and averaged about two weeks. The immigrants were left to their own devices to pass the time and face worries about the uncertainty of their fates. Storms and rough seas added to the discomfort along with being jammed into the bottom of the ship with no privacy. Men and women were separated into different sleeping quarters and met in the above deck areas where they went to escape the narrow bunks and dank atmosphere in their steerage area.

We have no information about the 1880s Cracotan immigrants' experience but a narrative written by Domenic Colabella about his voyage to America gives a good idea of this portion of the trip. He left Craco when he was 14 years old in 1905 and says, "... *I left Craco ... for Napoli. I traveled alone by slow boat ... it took 29 days to New York ... On the boat all the men were bunked in large rooms naturally, we were treated like cattle in a box railroad car. The food was like what they serve in prisons. But we were a gay young bunch, looking forward to America and nothing bothered us anymore.*"

Upon entering New York Harbor they were greeted by the City's skyline and after 1886 the Statue of Liberty. Once docked they transferred to smaller boats to go to the immigration station. It was here immigrants faced the greatest challenge hoping not to be rejected. A contemporary description of the entry process at Castle Garden provides insight:

*Before they are allowed in the main part of the building the immigrants have to pass in single file before the officials, who register their names, nationality, age, occupation, starting point and destination, and also ask whether they have any money or not. In case they are without funds or means of earning a living, they are detained at the Garden for a reasonable length of time. If no one appears to care for them they are eventually sent back across the sea.*

*After the immigrants have been registered they are allowed to do as they please. Those who have through railroad tickets with which to go to the interior of the country are sorted out by the agents of the different railroad lines, and are soon started on their way. Others, who decide to stay in New York for a time to look for work or wait for lagging friends, are left to the not altogether tender mercies of the boarding house "runners," who are admitted to the floor of the garden after the registration has been finished.*

*At this period of the proceedings the spectacle to onlooker is an interesting one. The queer costumes, many of them brightly colored, and the faces, made doubly expressive by the hopes and fears of their owners, give this crowd an aspect of almost feverish gayety. As soon as the first excitement of arrival is over, those who for any reason find it necessary to remain at the Garden gather in groups about the kettle topped stoves and discuss the incidents of the voyage or prospects for the future. Sometimes they camp in the Garden for days before starting out, sitting by day on their bags and bundles and sleeping on the hard benches at night.*

From there they entered a new life. The first group of Cracotans would experience major changes in New York City that allowed the 380 others from the town who followed during the decade after 1890 to find a more hospitable home.

# Crachesi Immigrants 1891-1900

From 1891-1900 there were 480 Crachesi who arrived in New York Harbor. The overwhelming majority landed in the last three years, which coincided with the burning of Ellis Island and the use of the Barge Office on Whitehall Street in Manhattan. The population of the town of Craco in 1881 was 2,015, so by the turn of the 20th century 25% of the town was now living in America. Emigration from the town continued over the next two decades adding 1,000 individuals and with the growth of the earlier immigrant families there were more Cracotans living in New York in 1921 than in Craco. The names of those who arrived in New York from 1891-1900 are:

## 1891—Castle Garden

Fittipaldi, Vincenzo  
Grasso, Angelo  
Seccafico, Giuseppe  
Maronne, Giuseppe  
Maronne, Michele  
Mastronardi, Nicola  
Rofania, Antonio

## 1892—Ellis Island

Guariglia, Margherita  
Guariglia, Maria  
Manghise, Pietro  
Tanico, Fedele  
Tanico, Vito Domenico  
Tuzio, Filomena  
Vozzi, Ambrogio

## 1893—Ellis Island

Acquavivo, Giuseppe  
Azzone, Pasquale  
Biancuni, Antonio  
Carciero, Francesco  
Carciero, Leonardo  
DeCesare, Nicola  
di Pierro, Rosa Maria  
Ferrante, Nicola  
Fugzi, Angela  
Fugzi, Innocenzo  
Fugzi, Rosa  
Gaetano, Angelo  
Gaetano, Domenico  
Gaetano, Giuseppe  
Gesualdi, Nicoli  
Grossi, Nicola  
Lombardi, Vito  
Luchetti, Giulia  
Mastronardi, Maria Gaeta.  
Mastronardi, Vincenzo  
Matera, Alessio  
Matera, Giuseppe  
Matera, Prospero  
Moglie, Maria  
Parisi, Apollina  
Rinaldi, Antonia  
Rinaldi, Domenico  
Sirillo, Antonio  
Sirillo, Rosa

Tanico, Ma-

ria Cattarina  
Tuzio, Giuseppe  
Viggiano, Lucia

## 1894—Ellis Island

Muzio Nicola  
Pargiallo, Maria  
Zaffaresa, Maria Guiseppe

## 1896—Ellis Island

De Marco, Gesualdo  
Gaetano, Paolo  
Mastronardi, Maria

## 1897—Ellis Island & Barge Office

Alderssio, Domenico  
Alderssio, Teresa  
Alderssio, Vincenzo  
Baldassarre, Brigida  
Baldassarre, Giulia  
Berardone, Gaetano  
Calabrese, Maria  
Cantasano, Antonia  
Cantasano, Maria  
Caricato, Francesco  
Colabello, Donato  
Colabello, Paolo  
De Felice, Sebastiano  
De Santi, Rosa  
D'Elia, Veiola  
Familgheti, Maria  
Forgione, Antonio  
Gallo, Maria  
La Gualana, Vincenzo  
Lucchetti, Antonia Maria  
Lucchetti, Filomenia  
Maronna, Porzia  
Matera, Angela  
Matera, Maria  
Matera, Rocco  
Matera, Vito  
Novelli, Giovanni  
Parziale, Domenico  
Pirretti, Leonardo  
Rinaldi, Antonio  
Riviello, Anna Lucia  
Riviello, Maria  
Rubertone, Leonardo

## 1898—Barge Office

Brunetti, Ma. Teresa  
Calabrese, Grazia  
Calabrese, Vincenzo  
Cantansano, Antonio  
Cantansano, Giuseppe  
Cantasano, Angela  
Carciano, Nicola  
Carulli, Carvallo  
Castellano, Donato  
Cigliano, Domenico  
Cigliano, Ma. Cristina  
Colabello, Fortunato  
Colabello, Paolo  
Colabello, Pasquale  
Colabello, Santalucia  
Curci, Antonia  
Curci, Domenica  
Curci, M Giuseppa  
De Cesare, Angela  
De Cesare, Isabella  
De Costale, Francesco  
De Costale, Pietro  
Di Santi, Donato Antonio  
Di Santi, Francesco  
Di Santi, M. Rosa

Di Santi, Maria  
Di Santi, Nicola  
Di Santo, Donato  
Di Santo, Maria Rosaria  
Episcopia, Angela  
Episcopia, Giulia  
Episcopia, Leonardo  
Episcopia, Maria  
Episcopia, Rosa  
Ferrante, Antonia  
Filippo, Rosa  
Forgione, Giovanni  
Forgione, Ma. Teresa  
Forgione, Pasquale  
Galante, Angela Maria  
Galante, Antonia Maria  
Galante, Francesco  
Galante, Ma. Maddalene  
Galante, Margherita  
Galante, Pasquale  
Galante, Vincenzo  
Gesualdi, Antonio  
Gesualdi, Francesco  
Grassi, Giovanni  
Grassi, Matteo  
Grieco, Giuseppe  
Guarino, Alfonso  
Guarino, Angela  
Izzo, Giuseppe  
Lanidaro, Francesco Antonio  
Lanivara, Antonio Mario  
Lanivara, Nicola  
Lanivara, Vincenzo  
Leone, Vitantopio  
Lorubio, Antonio  
Marano, Antonio  
Marrese, Vencenzo  
Matera, Vitanlonio  
Mele, Domenico  
Padula, Maria  
Petroccelli, Michele  
Porraco, Giuseppe  
Ragone, Gerardo  
Ragone, Giuseppe  
Resoldi, Maria  
Rigirone, Giuseppe  
Rigirone, Vincenzo  
Rinaldi, Domenico  
Rinaldi, Francesco  
Rinaldi, Vincenzo  
Riviello, Antonio  
Santalucia, Francesco  
Santalucia, Rosa Maria  
Serillo, Domenico  
Simonetti, Carbo  
Spera, Donato  
Spera, Gaetano  
Spera, Giulia  
Spera, Isabella  
Spera, Nicolotta  
Spera, Vincenzo  
Tuzio, Giuseppe Nicola  
Tuzio, Vincenzo  
Ubaldi, Rosa  
Vaccaro, Francesco  
Vaccaro, Vincenzo  
Viggianno, Prospero  
Viggianno, Rosa  
Vitorello, Giuseppe  
Vitorello, Vicollo  
Zaffarese, Antonia  
Zaffarese, Ma. Giuseppa  
Zaffarese, Teresa  
Zafferese,

# Crachesi Immigrants 1891-1900 (cont.)

## 1899—Barge Office

Artuso, Saverio  
Basile, Antonio  
Benedetto, Paolo  
Calabrese, Giuseppe  
Candeloro, Eustacchio  
Candeloro, Rosa  
Cantasano, Francesco  
Carantino, Petronilla  
Caricati, Antonio  
Caricati, Maddalena  
Castaldi, Nicoloetta  
Cigliano, Michele  
Contasano, Costantino  
Conte, Giacomo  
Conte, Pietro  
Costanzo, Dco. Antonio  
Costanzo, Ma. Filomena  
Costanzo, Nicola  
D'Addiego, Pietro  
De Fino, Angelo  
DeCesare, Paolo  
Dolcemele, Rosa  
Episcopia, Giovanni Andreo  
Forgione, Domenico  
Forgione, Ma. Vincenzo  
Galasso, Giuseppe  
Gesauldi, Pasquale  
Grieco, Giuseppe  
Grieco, Ma. Maddalena  
Grieco, Pasquale  
Griego, Angelantonio  
Grossi, Cantasano Atonia  
Grossi, Giuseppa  
Guariglia, Nicola Maria  
Hermanela, Antonio  
Hermanela, Giuseppa  
Laurio, Vito Gaetano,  
Leone, Maria Teresa  
Lisanti, Nicola  
Loporchio, Ferdinando  
Loporchio, Leonardo  
Loporchio, Ma. Carmela  
Lorubio, Donato  
Lorubio, Giuseppa  
Lorubio, Maria  
Marone, Giovanni  
Mastronardi, Gaetano  
Mastronardi, Vito Antonio  
Matera, Vincenzo  
Miadonna, Silvio  
Mormando, Fracesa Saverio  
Motarrose, Anna Maria  
Motarrose, Ma. Giovanna  
Motarrose, Rosa  
Padovani, Ma. Teresa  
Padovani, Pietro  
Padovani, Rosa  
Parziale, Giulia Ma.  
Pascariello, Antonio

Pugliese, Francesco  
Rago, Nicola  
Rigirona, Nicolo  
Rinaldi, Francesco  
Rinaldi, Nicola  
Riviello, Antonia  
Riviello, Gaetano  
Riviello, Giuseppe  
Rubertone, Domenica  
Rubertone, Domenico  
Seicsaccatti, Caterine  
Sillari, Giuseppe  
Sillari, Giuseppe Antonio  
Sillari, Maria Isabella  
Sillari, Michelangelo  
Silleri, Giulia  
Simonetti, Carlo  
Sirillo, Guiglielmo  
Spera, Leonardo  
Stabile, Vincenzo  
Tursi, Domenico  
Tuzio, Nicola  
Venita, Angela Maria  
Venita, Ma. Teresa  
Ventomiglia, Egidio  
Ventura, Rocca  
Viggiano, Prospero

Ferrante, Antonia  
Ferrante, Francesco  
Ferrante, Innocenzo  
Ferrante, Michele  
Fezza, Carmine  
Fezza, Maria  
Fezza, Pasquale  
Fittapaldi, Camela  
Forza, Maria  
Francavilla, Carlo  
Gaetano, Antonio  
Gallipoli, Pietro  
Gesaldi, Nicola  
Giustiniani, Italiano  
Grossi, Carlo  
Guariglia, Antonia  
Guariglia, Antonio  
Guariglia, Austragio  
Guariglia, Camillo  
Guariglia, Carmilla  
Guariglia, Giovanni  
Guariglia, Lucregia  
Guariglia, Margherita  
Lambio, Vincenzo  
Lauria, Anna  
Lombardi, Antonio  
Lombardi, Caesar  
Marano, Pasquale  
Marchese, Francesco  
Marmo, Andrea  
Maresse, Giuseppe  
Marzano, Francesco  
Montesano Vittorio Stello  
Mormando, Leonardo  
Mormando, Vincenzo  
Paduano, Antonio  
Pignataro, Nicola  
Rinaldi, Isabella  
Rinaldi, Ma. Caterina  
Riviello, Anna Lucia  
Riviello, Maria  
Riviello, Rosa  
Rosso, Egidio  
Santalucia, Angiala Maria  
Santalucia, Giuseppe  
Santalucia, Teresa  
Santalucia, Vincenzo  
Sarubbi, Giovanni  
Seccafico, Giacomo  
Seccafico, M. Giuseppa  
Seccafico, Guglielmo D.  
Spera, Vincenzo  
Toce, Antonio  
Toce, Paolo  
Toci, Domenico  
Toci, Giuseppe  
Toci, Ma Teresa  
Vaccaro, Pietro  
Veltre, Maria Maddalean  
Ventura, Antonia

## 1900—Barge Office

Artuso, Antonio  
Bilanceri, Maria  
Branda, Angela  
Branda, Antonia Maria  
Branda, Isabella  
Camberlengo, Angiola  
Camberlengo, Antonio  
Camberlengo, Carmello  
Camberlengo, Nicola  
Camberlengo, Teodora  
Cantasano, Maria  
Caputo, Pietro  
Caruso, Vittoria  
Caruso, Vittoria Stella  
Castellano, Giovannina  
Cigliano, Domenico  
Cigliano, Margherita  
Cigliano, Vincenzo  
Conte, Pietro  
Conte, Vitantonio  
D'Alessandro, Giovanni  
D'Alessandro, Vittoria  
De Costale, Antonia  
De Costole, Pasgia  
Di Gilio, Maddalena  
Di Gilio, Maria  
Di Pierro, Leonardo  
Di Santo, Basilio  
Di Santo, Francesco  
Dodici, Carmina  
Elia, Angelo

## Reminder:

You should have received your 2026 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](mailto:memberservices@thecracosociety.org)



VISIT: [www.thecracosociety.org](http://www.thecracosociety.org)

