

## **19<sup>th</sup> Century Basilicata Emigration: A Fratellanza & Sorellanza Based Society**

*Part 4 “C” of 6 Sections*

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### **Introduction:**

Part 4 “C” is the last of this subseries discussing the original foundation of the Basilicata based immigrant community in Trenton, N.J. The series covers some of the events in that early development from the years 1862 thru 1911. This last segment focuses on the years 1900 to 1911.

Between 1862 and 1900 the Italian immigrant and first generation American born element of Trenton’s population grew from an initial three men to a resident population of about 3,000. This was within the greater city population of about 73,000 or roughly 4%. To that point the majority, approximately 60%, of the 3,000 arrived via emigration from the Potenza region in the Italian State of Basilicata. The second largest regional contribution came from the area of Monteleone. Monteleone was the hometown of Fr. Jachetti, founding pastor, 1874-1886, of Our Lady of Loudes parish in the Chambersburg section of the city. These two regional Italian groups were originally heavily associated with the Roebling company’s recruitment of Italians as a source of cheap factory labor in the city.

In many respects the period from 1900 thru 1911 is the most interesting time in the development of both Trenton’s Basilicata, and general Italian American communities. Dramatic changes in the city’s population were occurring and are reflected in its statistics. By 1911 the city’s population had grown to about 97,000 people, and the Italian/ Italian American population had increased to approximately 7,000 or 7%. The city had become an industrial hub and home to many manufacturers. Much of the labor for this manufacturing was supplied by immigrant workers. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century these workers were arriving from many eastern and southern Europeans countries as well as Italy, Germany and Ireland. Statistically, Trenton’s foreign-born population surged. The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the overall foreign-born population of the city grow to about 27% of total.

### **Italian Immigration in the First Decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

From the American Revolution until 1890 the U.S. had received about 300,000 Italian emigres. 70% of these emigres arrived from the central and northern Italian peninsula. Many of these emigrants were highly educated or skilled. This was a relatively slow immigration pattern, with many northern European countries having presented in far greater numbers and having far greater presence in American culture.

In the decade of the 1890's the flow of Italian immigration to the U.S. changed. A staggering explosion of mostly, young, poor, undereducated, unskilled emigres numbering about 650,000 arrived from Italy in that single decade. By arriving in such large numbers, with few resources, language competence, or skills these emigrants presented a challenge to smooth or rapid assimilation. This sudden influx tripled the number of Italian emigres to the U.S. It also statistically raised Italian immigration to the historic level of third behind Irish and German sourced emigres. The regional Italian profile also changed in this decade, with about 70% coming from the southern part of the Italian peninsula.

This sudden surge of the 1890's was then compounded by the arrival of an additional 1.3 million Italians in the single decade of 1901 thru 1911. By 1911 only Ireland had sent more sons and daughters to the U.S. than had arrived from Italy. This decade also saw a rise to about 80% of the Italian emigres originating from southern Italy.

Southern Italy, in the decades after the 1860's unification, suffered from the Italian Federal government's systematic stripping of its industrial base, uneven land and agricultural reforms, corruption, and the decommission of its primary school system. Southern Italy went from having the largest monetary reserves, the highest literacy rate and greatest manufacturing capacity in Italy, pre-unification, to the lowest by 1900. Systemic poverty became the rule rather than the exception. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian emigres' condition reflected the systemic degradation that southern Italy had experienced post-unification.

Since about 80% of the Italian emigres, 1900-1911, were from the southern regions of Italy, they continued to be mostly young, poor, undereducated, and unskilled. The rapid appearance of such a large group of people who did not share language, religious or cultural identity with most American born residents caught America unprepared. Anxiety concerning assimilation and maintaining "American" cultural norms was rampant. Perceived racial disparity and competition for lower paying jobs also fueled tensions.

This rapid escalation of newly arriving Italian emigres also caused separate, dramatic changes in existing established Italian American communities. From the outside the American perception of this immigration and resettlement was that of an unprecedented surge of "Italian nationals". Americans perceived these emigres as a singular "people" with a "unified" foreign culture. However, regional distinctions made the resettlement within existing Italian American communities far less "unified" than American society perceived.

Many pre-20<sup>th</sup> century Italian Americans did not have a strong sense of being "Italian". Many had been born or raised apart from a unified Italy. Their Italian identities, to the extent they existed, were regionally fixed and did not reflect a sense of Italy as a nation. This sense of Italian regional identity was present in the early Italian community in Trenton. Within existing Italian American communities, like Trenton's south and east wards, Italian immigrants often settled in regional sub-clusters.

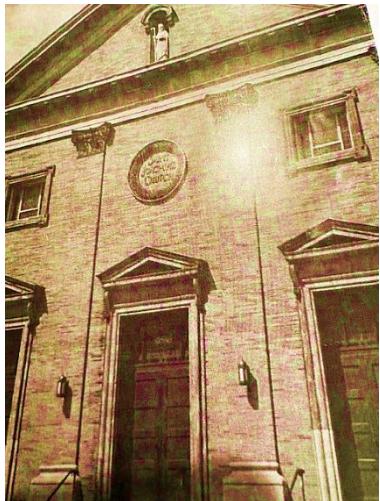
In Trenton, prior to 1900, upwards of 60% of the Italian immigrant and the American born Italian American element of the community had origins in Basilicata. The Basilicata portion of the larger Italian immigrant community had established roots that were already 30 to 40 years old by 1900. Many of those original immigrants from Basilicata had either emigrated as children or were born in the U.S. By the time the 20<sup>th</sup> century marched in, they identified somewhat by Italian region but, primarily as Americans. The 20th century's arriving Italian immigrants often acknowledged this assimilation by referring to these native U.S. born/raised as, "A-mer-ee-cans" rather than Italians. Although the merger of the two distinct groups into one community was not seamless, it was an important part of what laid the foundation for the full Americanization of the community.

Once the American "raised", or American "born" 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian emigres had acquired English language skills, community contacts, and access to the American educational system, American society's entry doors slowly, if reluctantly, began to open. Our Basilicata community's historic records for the 1901-1911 decade show young Italians/Italian Americans successfully entering local civic life as clerks, police, firemen and labor leaders. As the decade progressed, we see small numbers of Italians successfully enter elected politics, finance/banking, education, professional sports, law, medicine, and personal as well as established American corporate business. Many of these young Trenton residents, especially with Basilicata and Monteleone roots would quietly form the backbone of support which "opened" doors, for the generations of Italian immigrant and Italian Americans that followed. Their successes are truly a remarkable and inspiring story. Unfortunately, within the context of these articles there is space to highlight only a few of the dozens of individuals whose "firsts" in the community broke many social barriers.

### **Basilicata and the First Decade of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Italian Emigration**

References or statistics, correctly indicate that Basilicata is numerically not a primary or major regional component of Italian 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration. While those arriving from Italy after 1900 consisted of up to 90% southern Italian, only about 3% hailed from Basilicata. As a result, references to Basilicata or which consider earlier Basilicata community contributions, are overlooked in many Italian immigration narratives. Consistent with that, historic Trenton writings also consider the 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian immigrant "vibe" as predominately southern Italian, but much of the Basilicata contribution is overlooked there as well.

The original Basilicata community provided the foundation of the Italian community in Trenton. For example, St. Joachim's parish community played an integral part in the social, religious, cultural, and educational life in the Italian American community. The historic narratives, however, often fail to mention that the establishment of St. Joachim's Italian National Church in Trenton's was proposed to specifically address the underserved needs of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly Basilicata emigrant community.



Narratives concerning St. Joachim's parish frequently focus only on the post 1905 Italian parish culture and assimilation. By way of illustration, aside from the Feast of the Assumption, two regional feast days celebrating Mary were established early in the parish. The first, which was required in the very founding of the parish in 1902, is the San Fele/ Basilicata feast day known as of the feast of Ma Donna di Pierno. The second is the feast of the Ma Donna di Casandrino, a Neapolitan feast which began to be celebrated in the parish in 1906.

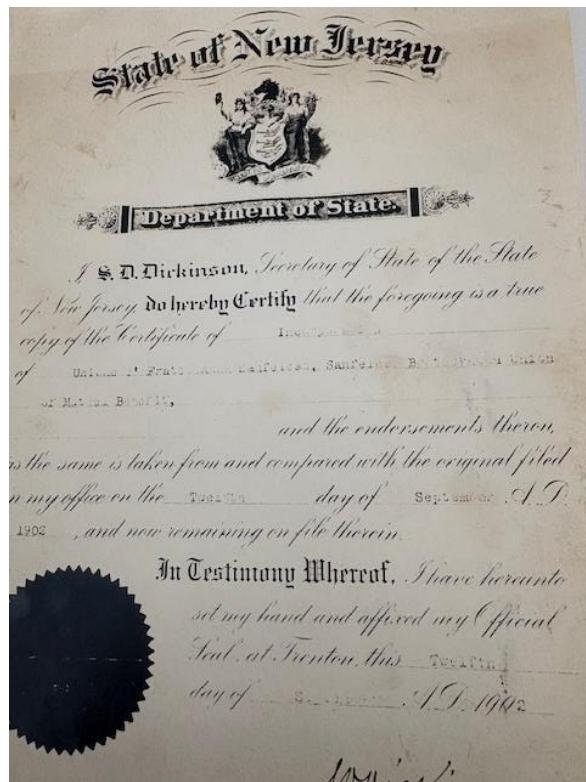
However, St. Joachim's Italian national parish is most remembered for the Marian feast of the "Ma Donna di Casandrino", or "the Feast of Lights". This religious feast and accompanying week-long street fair captured the vibrant energy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian immigrant community. As such, it is primarily remembered as celebratory in nature, and an expression of transplanted Neapolitan/Italian traditions and culture. The palpable energy and zest of this festival is in part a reflection of the fact that two-thirds of all Italian immigrants arrived after 1905. As such the festival grew as the community grew and continued to be fed by a flow of new immigrants. However, this celebratory feast has little directly to do with the Italian immigrant issues and events that brought about the founding of the parish.

As previously stated, Chambersburg's Immaculate Conception parish church in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century was never oriented toward the needs of the emerging Italian community. This lack of orientation toward an emerging group was not unique to Trenton and was experienced in many established Catholic communities. Italian immigrant parishioners frequently became, for several reasons, "basement" Catholics, isolated or segregated within these established communities. A strong sense of religious alienation began to arise within the largely Catholic immigrants arriving from Italy. Italian immigrant feast days with celebratory traditions were banned not just in local churches but within most American Dioceses throughout the country. This alienation was recognized by the Vatican and resulted in the direct establishment by Pope Leo XIII of the "national" parish concept. The first of these so-called Scalabrini parishes in the U.S. emerged around 1886. As the number of "national" parishes grew they forced inclusion of ethnic traditions and culture within the American Catholic Church. It was following the Pope's initiative that the Diocese of Trenton in the late 1890's, first approached the Italian immigrant community in Trenton regarding formation of an Italian National parish.

In order to offer a national Italian parish solution, the Diocese needed to secure Trenton's Italian community's commitment, and support. In the 1890's this meant securing the Basilicata community's support. The Basilicata community in Trenton required certain conditions be guaranteed by the Diocese before they would lend that support. The first condition was that the parish be named St. Joachim's parish. This was to honor the original N.Y.C. Scalabrini parish that had first welcomed Basilicata religious celebrations in 1889. The second condition was that

the feast of the Ma Donna de Pierno be celebrated in the parish every year, on its traditional religious mid-August date.

(Note: When St. Joachim's parish N.Y.C. was formally incorporated in New York State in 1889, the predominately Basilicata community within the parish formally incorporated the "Potenza Society" for support of the parish. That pattern was followed when St. Joachim's parish, Trenton, was incorporated in 1902. The Basilicata community of Trenton followed by incorporating the San Fele Society to support the new parish. When the Trenton parish was established all five lay members chosen for the parish council were of Basilicata origin. Keeping with centuries' old Basilicata tradition, the Feast of the Ma Donna Pierno is celebrated as a purely religious observance. The Basilicata community in the Trenton area continues to return to the parish to celebrate this feast, every year, as it has since 1902).



San Felese Incorporation Certificate

### More Than Cultural Discrimination at the Root of the National Church Concept

19<sup>th</sup> century Italian immigrants to the U.S. faced a number of cultural and ethnic based barriers. These barriers intensified as time progressed and immigrant numbers increased. In order to describe the 20<sup>th</sup> century development of the Trenton Italian-American community, I think it is best to review the origins and founding of Our Lady of Lourdes/Immaculate Conception parish. The parish was started in 1874 by Fr. Jachetti and Fr. Marzetti. It was intended to be the parish Church for the Borough of Chambersburg. The Catholic elements of the Borough were primarily

of Irish and German immigrant origin. Fr. Jachetti and Fr. Marzetti were Italian Franciscan priests recruited to America for their language skills, specifically, German. The initially small Italian element in the city's population gravitated to the parish because of the priests' Italian cultural and common language background.

I should emphasize that the original Franciscan recruitment from Italy to America in 1856 was to address communication with German Catholic immigrants. So, for Jachetti and Marzetti, providing the same efforts for the growing population of "Italian" speaking immigrants was a natural extension of their mission. (Note: I do not want to leave out that Fr. Jachetti upon seeing increasing numbers of eastern European immigrants, petitioned his Order early in the 1880's to send priests with Eastern European language skills. This would eventually lead to the establishment of Trenton's first Polish Catholic community Church). We should acknowledge that these early Italian immigrant Franciscan priests recognized the value and importance of helping with all ethnic immigrant transitions while preserving unique cultural and religious heritages. Unfortunately, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century their belief in the preservation of "foreign" ethnic traditions placed many of the Italian Franciscans in direct philosophical conflict with many American Bishops.

As the American based Franciscan Provence in Buffalo matured after 1856, its newly ordained members were largely American born of northern European ancestry. As such, they were "Americanized" and not as directly in tune with the growing multi "cultural" eastern and southern European immigration. Around 1886 the Buffalo Provence headed by a more "Americanized" clergy took charge of the American Provence. As part of that transition, Fr. Marzetti was removed and reassigned to start St. Francis parish, an Italian national parish, in Hoboken in 1888. Fr. Jachetti was retained in the Chambersburg parish, but not as pastor. In a break with Fr. Jachetti's vision, the parish was renamed Immaculate Conception Parish. Fr. Jachetti was assigned the task of completing the fundraising and construction of the Chestnut Ave. Church. (Note: This was a major building project, costing an estimated \$75,000 to build. The church construction was completed in 1892). In 1892 Fr. Jachetti was reassigned as Fr. Marzetti's assistant in Hoboken. This left Trenton without an Italian priest to service what was then about 2,000 Italian/Italian American residents.

In American Catholicism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a bias against elaborate saintly feast days and display of statuary. Once the Immaculate Conception Church was completed, and the new Americanized clergy installed, it was not sympathetic to Basilicata religious traditions and feast day observances. Fortunately, St. Joachim's parish in N.Y.C., a predominantly Basilicata parish, was established as an Italian national parish in 1889. This provided the Basilicata community in Trenton travel opportunity for the annual celebration of the community's principal feast day of the Ma Donna Di Peirno in the "Five Points".

In Trenton, the lack of empathy toward longstanding religious celebrations was not the only source of discord between the new administration at the Immaculate Conception parish and

Trenton's Italian immigrant community. There also appears to have been a politically based bias. To examine that aspect of the rift a little further I will cite, in full, a short article that was published in the New York Times on August 20, 1900.

#### “Priest Bars Uniformed Body”

#### “Garibaldi Society Ignores Orders and is Shut from Trenton Church”

“Trenton, N.J., Aug. 19—Special services in the Immaculate Conception Church in memory of King Humbert of Italy were held this afternoon at the request of the Italian societies of this city, which had arranged to be present. The Rev. Father Ludwig, pastor of the Church, informed the societies that he did not want them to come to church in uniform.

The members of the Garibaldi Society went to Church in full uniform, and were denied admittance by the pastor, who was at the door. The excluded society made no demonstration but returned to the association's hall and indulged in talk of bringing a suit for damages. Father Ludwig consistently has refused to recognize the Garibaldi Society because of its annual celebration of “Independence Day” in Italy, which marked the discontinuance of the temporal power of the Pope”.

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**ITALIANS MOURN THEIR KING.**  
**Memorial Services Held by United Societies of Brooklyn.**

The United Italian Societies of Brooklyn held exercises yesterday afternoon in Prospect Hall in memory of King Humbert. Preceding the services about 1,200 Italians, representing the Brooklyn organizations, gathered at Hamilton Avenue and Union Street and marched to the meeting place. In the centre of the hall a catafalque had been erected. This was draped in black, with gold and silver trimmings, and was surmounted by a cross. The hall also was decorated in festoons of black, and with the flags and shields of United Italy. The day's programme included orchestral and instrumental music. Ferdinando Prat, Italian Vice Consul in this city, was the first speaker, delivering his remarks in Italian. Others who spoke were Prof. Giuseppe Cadicamo and G. Pastore, in Italian, and J. Grattan McMahon of Brooklyn in English. The hall contained over 2,000 people.

**The New York Times**  
Published: August 20, 1900  
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From conversations in the community, most 19<sup>th</sup> century Basilicata emigres in Trenton did not have a favorable view of the Italian monarchy, so I don't think that the Basilicata segment of the community cared about the memorial service. They did however, often express strong opinions favoring the discontinuance of the temporal power of the Pope. The pastor was correct in assessing that the community objected to the secular power of the Papacy. For hundreds of years the region, including many of the region's most renowned theologians, espoused a simpler role for clergy, more spiritual, less temporal. At any rate, the new Franciscan administration at Immaculate Conception Church and the local Italian immigrant community did not develop a close bond. The Diocese struck upon the establishment of an Italian "national" Church, as the remedy for the rift.

(Note: There were many great Church leaders at the time that provided spiritual and administrative support to the growing immigrant communities. I have mentioned Pope Leo XIII and Cardinal Scalabrini at the Vatican level. They sent among many others Mother Cabrini. I also acknowledge the efforts of Bishop Bayley, the nephew of Mother Elizabeth Seton, who recruited Fr. Jachetti to New Jersey).

#### A Consequence of Construction of St. Joachim's Italian National Church

There have been many articles written about the community fundraising and organizing to build the relatively modest Church building that would be St. Joachim's Church on Butler Street. A couple of the facts concerning construction that are not commonly known should be discussed here. It has been documented that a lot of the basic building materials for the Church construction were donated by the Roebling Company in 1903. As far as I know this was a unique donation for the Roebling Company. The remaining costs of the building, estimated at \$14,000, had to be raised from donations within the community. In addition, the project's success was dependent on the actual labor for the construction being organized and supplied by parishioners.

I think it is telling that the community had established itself sufficiently to be up to a construction task on this scale by 1903. The success of the project makes it clear that the parishioners had the mechanical and organizational skills for the work.

With regard to the donation of building materials, local newspaper articles reported that the reason for the Roebling Company's unprecedented generosity was the deep respect and admiration the company had for the culture and hard-work ethic of the Italian community in Trenton. A community from which many of their employees were drawn. Our Basilicata family oral histories suggest a slightly different rationale.

From 1879-1900 the majority of Italian immigrant workers hired by the Roebling Company were from Basilicata. They came from an Italian regional society of closely associated villages and towns. They functioned socially, as a loosely organized, fratellanza. They also naturally structured at work as a labor fratellanza, supporting and looking out for one another. This early on began to resemble "organized" labor to management at the Trenton factory plant. In general,

most major corporations of the time sought out ways to discourage any form of perceived unionization. Roebling Company was no exception. However, the deep-rooted social/familial connections within the Basilicata community made “fratellanza” busting a non-option. I was told that when the Italian national church was proposed, the community asked/demanded a contribution toward the Church construction from the company. The Company was in no position to be anything but “reluctantly” generous. However, future Company actions suggests that the donation came at a cost to the community.

In the next wave of Roebling facility expansion, the company choose a building site further south of Trenton on the Delaware River. There in 1904 they began building factories and incorporated what at the time was known as a “company” town. Which means that everything in the town was owned by the Roebling Company, houses, schools, banks, stores, goods, shops, police, etc. A community of employees is completely controlled by the Company’s management. The town itself was named Roebling and Roebling management ensured it had its stamp on every aspect of community life.

Seeking to continue to employ cheap labor the Company again turned to newly arriving immigrants from eastern and southern Europe. However, when the town and factories were built the only thing banned from this “complete” factory town were unions, and the presence of Italian workers. No Italians were employed in the Roebling factories in Roebling N.J. No Italians could own or operate a business in the town. An Italian could not even open a barber shop within the confines of the town limits. Italians did however continue to be employed in the Trenton plants, continued to act in close association, and continued to unionize in the Trenton shops.

### **Dealing with a Changing Emigrant Dynamic Within the Community**

The overwhelming majority of newly arriving Italians to Trenton after 1900 were hard-working mostly poor, illiterate southern Italians, but not Basilicatans. The post 1900 group would soon become the majority of the community. As I said, this transition was not always seamless. Basilicatans had played a pivotal role in the establishment of the St. Joachim’s parish from its proposal in the late 1890’s thru the parish incorporation in 1902, and the Church construction in 1903. Initially, all five members of the parish council were Basilicatan from 1902 thru 1905. In 1905 in the interest of greater inclusivity St. Joachim’s pastor retired one of the Basilicata council members, Vito DiLorenzo, replacing him with a member representing a regional association with the newer arrivals. Apparently, according to press reports, 2,000 parishioners showed up in protest. Eventually, things calmed down and as the numbers of new arrivals dramatically increased, their basic needs became a priority within the community. Along the lines of meeting those needs, the Basilicata and Monteleone communities took the lead in advocating for a religious based Italian primary school. This was seen as a priority because many of the very young emigrants had no English skills and they were falling behind in the public schools. St. Joachim’s elementary school was established in 1910 with the arrival of nuns of the Italian Filippini teaching Order. I am mentioning this briefly here but will examine the

interaction of the nuns with the community in future articles, especially as it applies to women within the community.

### **Area Anti-Italian Discrimination and Harassment**

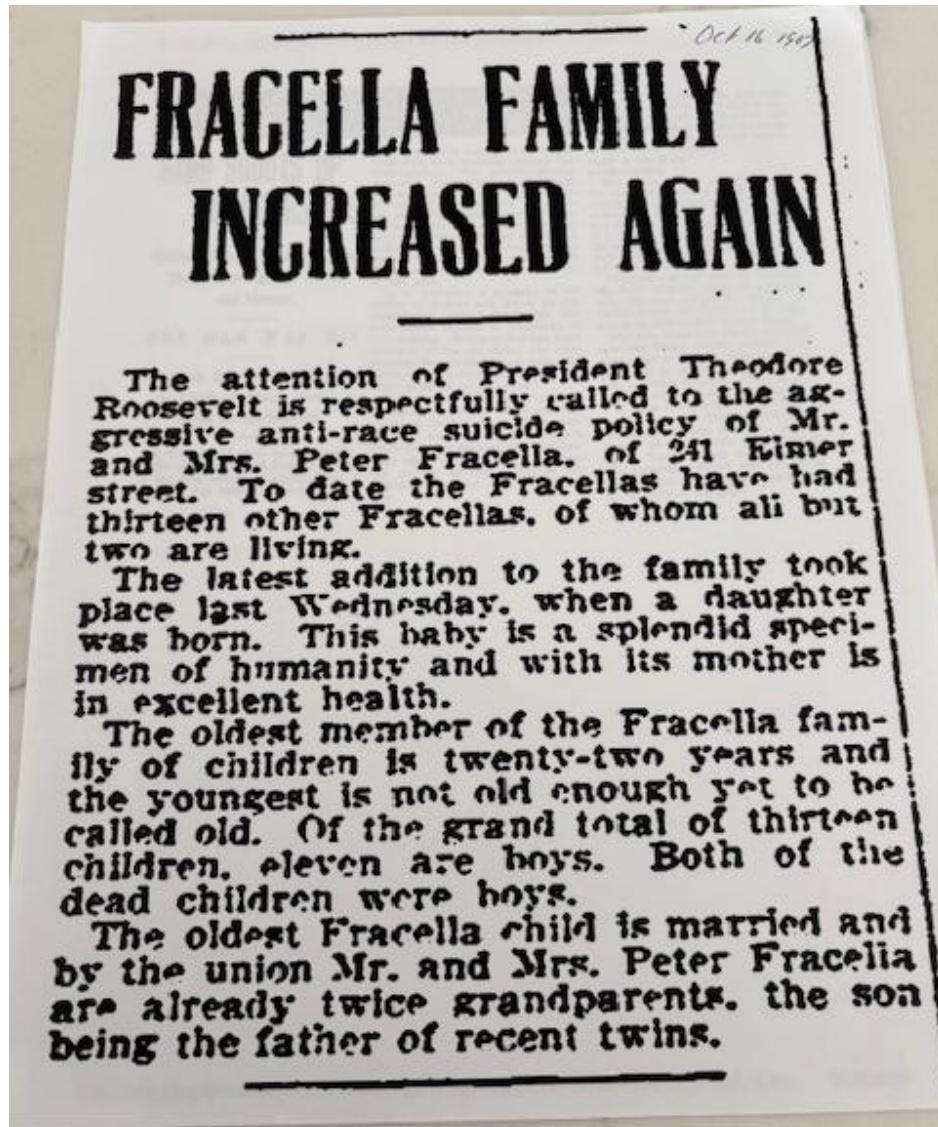
As the Italian community grew, it increasingly became the subject of various forms of discrimination and harassment. Some of the negativity was directed at their religious beliefs, most Italian immigrants identified as Catholic and strong anti-Catholic sentiment existed in many parts of the country. Many elements of American society also feared the growing “foreign” presence, which was considered destructive to established American institutions. The introduction of different cultures, language, foods, traditions and possible loyalties to countries other than the U.S. also were seen by many as reasons to hold these “newcomers” suspect.

However, one aspect of Italian immigration that did not generally apply to other European emigres was the issue of race. As most 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian emigres were from rural southern Italy their skin tone and hair color tended to be darker than northern Europeans. Northern Italians had for political purposes in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century labeled southern Italians as a “mixed” race or in the term used a “mulatto” race. Generally, mulatto was used to refer to someone of mixed European and sub-Saharan African, heritage. While by fact and regional history genetically untrue, division by race was a powerful “decider” in many aspects of American society. The “mulatto” label was picked up by those who wanted to use race bigotry as a weapon to be directed at Italian immigrants. The acts of bigotry often included violent intolerance. There were many examples of how such intolerance manifested against the Italian immigrant community in Trenton. I will give just a few examples as they applied to the time period under discussion. Here I draw from incidents recorded, Angela’s archives, involving my own ancestors.

As I have written, the first 19<sup>th</sup> century Basilicata immigrants supported themselves through private entrepreneurial/business endeavors. As there were initially few Italians in the city the success of these early endeavors depended mostly on interaction with the greater Trenton community. This interaction, while mostly positive often exposed them directly to incidents of harassment and violence. Included among a second generation of Basilicata residing in Trenton were my great-grandparents Angela and Peter Frascella. Although they were born in Basilicata, they emigrated as children in the 1870’s. They subsequently met and married in Trenton in 1882. Peter was, by all measure, a successful local businessman and well known beyond the small Italian enclave. He had multiple real estate holdings, including a family home on Elmer St. purchased in mid-1880’s. At the time this location was largely a non-Italian neighborhood. It was from that home that the couple would raise their family, my grandfather included, starting around 1885.

By the early 1900’s the family had arrived at an almost complete third generation and had started a fourth generation in residence in the city. Based on stories told to me by my grandfather’s siblings it was common for them, as children, to be subject to both physical and verbal racially motivated harassment. This could occur simply by walking the streets of their neighborhood.

One example of this pattern of harassment was reflected in a newspaper article on the birth of Peter and Angela's last child in 1907. Apparently in certain quarters of the community at large, this birth was so racially alarming as to warrant headlines, as published in a local newspaper Oct. 16, 1907, under the heading, "Frascella Family Increased Again".



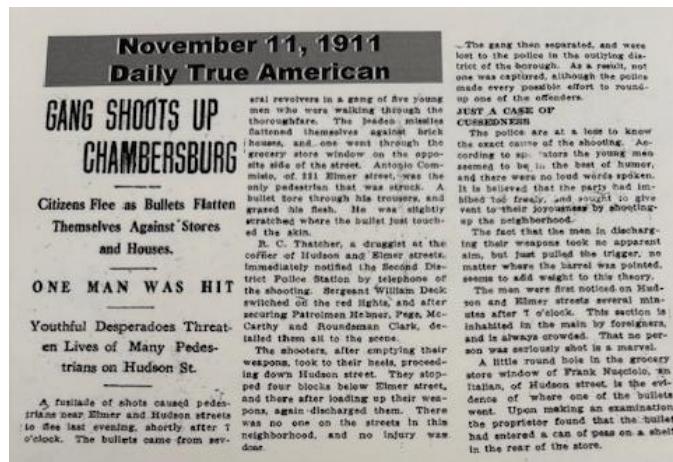
What followed was an opt-ed of four paragraphs whose sole purpose appears to be, to dox the family. The first paragraph reads:

"The attention of President Theodore Roosevelt is respectfully called to the aggressive anti-race suicide policy of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Frascella of 241 Elmer Street. To date the Frascellas have had thirteen other Frascellas, of whom all but two are living".

The article goes on to give details about the family, clearly meant to concentrate negative reaction and attention on the family and its homestead location. The nature of this type of attention apparently was to encourage fear and racial tension from a growing and organized anti-Italian element in the greater Trenton area community.

It is hard to say how many, or the precise nature of the acts of harassment and violence were experienced within the community. I was told of some of the incidents however, most were never formally reported. The community in that time frame considered both the press and the police as more likely to side with the anti-Italian groups, so they didn't report incidents.

The one incident that was publicly reported, and that appears to be related by location to the above "birth" article, took place on the evening of November 10, 1911. According to a newspaper article a group of young men were seen gathering in the area of Hudson and Elmer



...The gang then separated, and were lost to the police in the outlying district of the borough. As a result, not one was captured, although the police and the public made a valiant effort to round up one of the offenders.

#### JUST A CASE OF CUGGERNUTNESS

The police are at a loss to know the exact cause of the shooting. According to spectators the young men, seemed to be in the best of humor, and there were no loud words spoken, and there was no apparent reason for the attack.

A bullet tore through his trousers, and grazed his flesh. He was slightly scratched where the bullet just touched the skin.

Mr. Thatcher, a druggist at the corner of Hudson and Elmer streets, immediately notified the Second District Police Station by telephone of the shooting. Sergeant William Deck switched on the red light, and after ascertaining the facts, Officer George McCarthy and Roundeman Clark, detailed them all to the scene.

The shooters, after emptying their weapon, took to their heels, proceeding down Hudson street. They stopped a few blocks below Elmer street, and there, after loading up their weapons, again discharged them.

There was no one on the streets in this neighborhood, and no injury was done.

Streets. Unprovoked and acting in concert, they pulled handguns and began randomly spraying the neighborhood in the direction the second block of Elmer St. They then ran about four blocks toward Fulton Street, reloaded and repeatedly firing their weapons. From there they were able to disappear into suburban Hamilton Township. This incident would probably not have been reported if not for the fact that Thatcher's drug store on the corner of

Hudson and Elmer was shot up. The owner, a non-Italian, R.C. Thatcher reported it to the police. The police did investigate, and found a number of bullet holes in several buildings there and around Fulton St. The police located only one victim that they could identify as shot, Anthony Commiso of 231 Elmer St. This location was five houses further in from Peter and Angela's house. The newspaper article indicated that the police were unable to identify the shooters. While the article indicated that there was no apparent cause for the shooting, it noted that, the intersection was known to be, "inhabited in the main by foreigners and is always crowded". (Note: Mr. Thatcher lived and operated that pharmacy into the 1950's. What I recall is that you could have filmed the pharmacy scene in "It's a Wonderful Life" in his shop, very old school.).

Because of the success of this violent act, the community anticipated that it would be repeated. In fact, according to my sources there was an attempt by this group to repeat the incident about a month later. My understanding, which was rendered in the telling with considerable detail, was that the second attempt at violence did not go well for this outside group. Apparently the second incident was sufficient to create the realization among these agitators that violence was going to be met with in kind violence. There was no "third" incident.

From the conversation I had, it was felt within the Italian community that the group responsible was a sort of incubator cell. A cell for what formally, in New Jersey, came into being about ten years later, the New Jersey chapter the Klu Klux Klan. Most people today do not realize that the Klan had a significant presence in Hamilton Township, East Windsor and Ewing in the 1920's. In all the Klan had a "registered" membership of 60,000 at its peak in New Jersey in the 1920's. There were more "registered" Klansmen in New Jersey than in several southern States. For several decades racially motivated discrimination held significant sway in certain aspects of New Jersey's politics, finance and social exclusionary legislation. While later applied discrimination may have been more subtle than direct violence it nevertheless was a feature of American life that many Italians had to deal with. (Note: An interesting New Jersey fact, Marconi American Wireless Co. operated wireless transmission towers throughout New Jersey in the early 1900's. These sites included 400 acres in Wall Twp N.J. in 1912 which consisted of multiple 500-foot towers. The site was taken over by the U.S Navy in W.W.I. After the war it was sold to General Electric which formed R.C.A to divest Marconi American Wireless, considered a foreign corporation, of its interests. The 400-acre site fell into disuse and was resold in 1926 to a group representing the Klu Klux Klan. The Klan used the site as its N.J. headquarters and as a summer camp for its New Jersey membership into the 1930's. Today the site, off Marconi Rd. Exit 7, off Rt. 18, is part of a Wall Twp. municipal park upon which the upper portion of one of the original towers has been rebuilt.).

While I am limiting this article to events up until 1911, the Italian community continued to encounter many obstacles in the path to assimilation. As Trenton's Italian community grew and progressed an entire treatise could be written as to how the community "organized" in self-help groups to overcome social, financial and political obstacles.

However rather than going there I think it is important to spend some time in the next articles discussing the unique role played by Basilicata women during the 1850–1911-time frame.