

Crachese Life in 1920 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 May 2026 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.

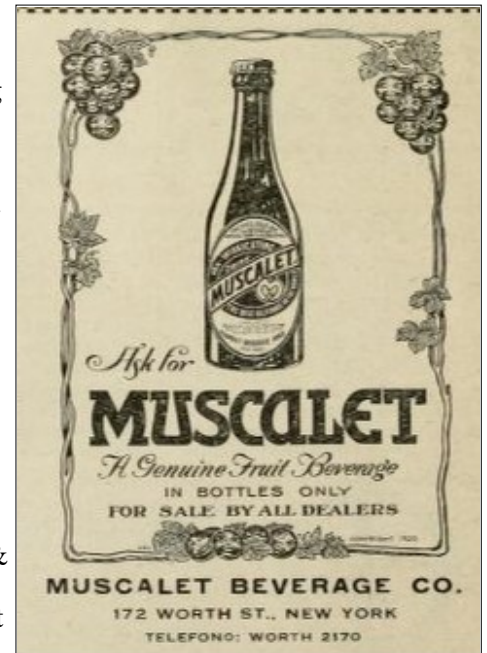
Domenico Colabella (b. 1891, Craco) returned to Italy in 1915 and served with the national police force in the war zone where he received several decorations. In 1920 he returned to New York, marrying Carmela Parziale in 1921, and had three sons by 1928.

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 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), due to Prohibition closed his Stone Front Bar & Grill (see August 2013 Newsletter) 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.

Antonio Camberlengo, by this time a well known fighter known as "Italian Joe Gans" 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.



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

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Craco in the Movies Again

Craco Vecchio's long history of being a movie site continues with the announcement of Mel Gibson's new movie, "The Resurrection of the Christ" a sequel to his 2004 movie, "The Passion of the Christ."

The filming took place over 134 days in 2025 across multiple locations in Italy, including Rome, Bari, Ginosa, **Craco**, Brindisi, Torre Guaceto, and Matera.

The two-part film, titled *The Resurrection of the Christ*, is scheduled for release on May 6, 2027, and May 25, 2028.

See : [Mel Gibson reveals first look at two-part sequel 'The Resurrection of the Christ' – P.M. News](#)

A preview about the films can be seen at: [Bing Videos](#)

Craco: For the Lens of History



A View Before The Frana—Cav. Simone started taking photos of Craco and producing postcards from them in the 1920s. After WWII his son Aldo joined the business and they continued to make visits to Craco and took more up-to-date photographs showing how the town evolved. By adding color to the black and white photograph images the vibrancy of the town came through. However, it was the Franca and subsequent abandonment of the town that created the haunting environment that provides the scenic background for so many movies.

Starting in 1953, and including this latest movie Craco has served as the setting for nine films. Read about them on the Society's website: [The Craco Society - Films, Documentaries and Books](#)

The Crachesi Immigrants 1921-1924

From 1921-1924 there were very few individuals that passed through Ellis Island giving their last residence as Craco. Changes resulted in the closing of the "Golden Door" to America for most immigrants for decades. (Note: names are presented as spelled in the Ellis Island database to facilitate locating individual records.)

1921

Avena, Antuono
Bernini, Antuono
Bernini, Giuseppe
Bernini, Santa Maria
Bernini, Vincenzo
Bernino, Massinigliano
Camperlengo, Salvatore
Cataldi, Antonia
Cataldi, Maria Vincenza
D'Elia, Francesco
De Costole, Pietro
Di Primo, Filomena
Episcopia, Giuseppe
Forgione, Giuseppe
Forgione, Rosina
Francavilla, Maria Giuseppa
Gorgoglione, Antonio
Mastronardi, Giuseppe
Mormando, Antonio
Pandillo, Salvatore
Pascariello, Isabella
Rinaldi, Giuseppe
Riviello, Consiglia
Romano, Maria
Santalucia, Giovanni
Simonetti, Gino
Simonetti, Giuseppe
Simonetti, Margherita
Simonetti, Salvatore

1922

Andrisano, Prospero
Camperlengo, Pasquale
Giuliano, Antonio
Giuliano, Domenico
Giuliano, Francesco
Giuliano, Giacinta
Giuliano, Giustina
Giuliano, Teresa
Giuliano, Vincenza
Lauria (Avena), Maria
Vincenza Sillari, Natale

1923

Magghise, Antonio
Mastronardi, Francesco
Pellegrino, Francesco
Pellegrino, Francesco
Rinaldi, Domenico
Rinaldi, Vincenzo
Viggiani, Paolo

1924

Camperlengo, Angela
D'Elia, Maria
Ferrante, Leonardo
Galante, Pasquale
Gorgoglione, Rosina
Gorgoglione, Giuila
Sillaro, Rosina
Tuzo, Maddalena

Crachese Life in 1920 New York *continued*

On Dec. 25, 1925 this struggle came to a head at an event there. 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 every one was released and no one was ever prosecuted for the crime.

With improving economic conditions, the Crachesi who were able 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. ■

Italian Heritage and Culture Month 2026

The Board of Directors of the Italian Heritage and Cultural Committee of New York, Inc., (IHCC-NY, Inc.) announced the new theme for the annual October celebration in New York for this year.

The theme will be the *50th Anniversary of the Italian Heritage & Culture Committee*, in recognition of the IHCC-NY, Inc.'s work over the past half-century in promotion Italian and Italian-American heritage and culture in the United States.

This wonderful annual event coincides with the Society's 125th anniversary celebration of the feast of San Vincenzo in New York City.

The Society is planning a special celebration on this milestone year with an expanded celebration on the feast day. Announcements of the event, ways to participate and support it will be announced soon.

Meanwhile, mark your calendar and make plans to be in New York City on October 25th. ■



In Memoriam

† *With Our Ancestors*



Nicola Mormando
March 27, 2026

Over the 19 year history of the Craco Society many individuals have made contributions that connect us to the ancient town. Nicola Mormando was one of them, with his gift of a piece of wood from a door at his family homestead that was used to mount the plaques on the statue of San Vincenzo in the Shrine Church of the

Most Precious Blood in New York City. Following is the letter from 2011 by president Joe Rinaldi to Nicola:

On behalf of all the members of The Craco Society, I want to thank you for your kind contribution of the wooden board that will be used to mount the plaque dedicated to San Vincenzo in New York. Your gift makes a tangible connection to Craco and our ancestors who gave this statue to the church 110 years ago.

We believe that this will be the first time there is a plaque here on the statue of San Vincenzo in all that time and the board you sent will be important to display it properly. With our deepest gratitude we wish you and your family the greatest blessings of San Vincenzo.



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