

NUTLEY UNICO

(*nutleyunico.org*)

March 2022 NEWSLETTER

Next Dinner Meeting
Thursday, April 7, 2022, 7:00 pm
at
Mama Vittoria

March Meeting

- Eastern Regional District Governor, Steve Calentone, and PNP Joe Agresti were in attendance. Steve mentioned that the largest number of UNICANS in the country are from our eastern region.
- Joe Agresti responded to how all Unico chapters could work to draw in more young people. His survey however showed that the best age to retain membership is the 40 yr olds.
- The 21-22 annual budget was approved.
- Chapter Award recipients were announced. The **Lifetime Achievement Award** will be presented to Phil Cuzzi, a major league umpire whose work with ALS has been exemplary. The **Unican of the Year** is Lorraine Bini Kucinski. Lorraine's efforts to keep the Chapter functioning during the Covid months and years was critical to keeping our members involved and safe. The dates for presenting these awards are being worked on.

Culture & Heritage

Dan Marucci celebrated our culture and heritage with a special Italian "The Price is Right" game. Thanks to Marty DiPalma for providing the video equipment.

(An additional Culture & Heritage item will be found at the end of this newsletter.)

Good & Welfare

- Joe & Maria Cervasio's daughter, Tina, will be the Grand Marshal of the Nutley-Belleville Columbus Day Parade in October.
- Jim & Elaine Mauro welcomed their 6th grandchild, Reed Christopher Mauro, to the family on Feb. 25. The proud parents are John & Chrystal Mauro.
- Our condolences to Tom Pucci & family on the passing of his dad, Charles Pucci, at the age of 99 on Feb. 24.

- Dan Geltrude will be honored as the “Businessman of the Year” and Tom Evans for “Civic Affairs” at the Nutley Rotary dinner on April 7. The Chapter will take a \$100 ad in the program journal.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on Tuesday, March 17. Among the items discussed were:

- Unico National News
National Scholarship applications are available on line until April 15. This includes scholarships for undergraduate studies and graduate school.

The Unico National Convention is scheduled for Wednesday, July 27 – Sunday, July 31, at the Omni Royal in New Orleans.

- District News (The District Governor is our Past President Marie Solimo).
The next District VII meeting is Tuesday, March 22.

The District VII Piccolo Dinner is Tuesday, April 5, at the Greycliff, Moonachie. **Our recipient will be Mathew Harbison. Tickets to this event are \$50. Any member interested in attending should contact F. Cocchiola at fcoch@aol.com**

- Local Chapter Business

The Nominating Committee will be convening soon to discuss a slate of officers for 2022-23.

Recognition for members who have been in our chapter for 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50 years will be included in our April 7 meeting. This will include those not recognized previously due to Covid having cancelled some of our meetings. Those being recognized at the April meeting are John Russo and Dr. Joe Scarpelli (35 years in 20-21); Pat Ritacco Sr., Anthony Biondi, Jr. and Dan Geltrude (25 years in 20-21) and Joe Cervasio, Alan Genitempo and Greg Tolve (25 years in 21-22).

Frank Russo is working on the annual bus ride to AC also. Details to follow.

Thanks to those who participated in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade. However, we will be hoping for a much larger contingent of marchers at the Nutley Memorial Day Parade on May 30. We need walkers and riders. Cars are welcome. The Executive Committee is working on forming a Parade Committee for future events.

The Committee also discussed having a special night at our October meeting where members would bring a son or daughter to the meeting. This would be a

family celebration for Italian-American Heritage Month, while possibly attracting new young members. More on this to follow.

The Chapter by-laws are still in the process of review. Once the committee agrees on a final draft they will be presented to the membership for approval.

Upcoming Events

- April 5 – District VII Piccolo Dinner.
- April 7 – Chapter dinner meeting. **We will be present our three major chapter scholarships (\$4,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000) at this meeting.**
- May 5 – Chapter dinner meeting
- May 15 (Sunday) – Chapter **Brian Piccolo Scholarship Breakfast** at the Chandelier at 9:00 am. Male & Female Piccolo Scholarships will be presented along with approximately 8 additional scholarships. The cost is \$35 per person. **SAVE THE DATE.** We are soliciting gifts/baskets to raffle off at this event. Please notify Marie Solimo or me if you have any items.

Members are encouraged to attend this event if at all possible. We will have the parents and family members of 8-9 scholarship recipients at this breakfast. A good turnout of members sends a strong message about our commitment to the community and education.

CULTURE & HERITAGE

As noted in the previous newsletter, I recently came into possession of a manuscript titled, *The Early Italian Settlers in Newark*. This is a compilation of the writings of the grandfather of Dr. Virginius Mattia, Jr., who resided in Nutley and was the former President/CEO of Hoffman La Roche. Dr. Mattia's grandfather, Peter/Petrino Mattia, came to this country from Calabritto, a province of Avellino, with his family as a little boy and settled in Newark in 1873. He began to write about his experiences, and those of the other early Italian immigrants who came to Newark in the 1880's. His papers were passed on to his granddaughter, Jessie Mattia Rosa, Dr. Mattia's sister, in 1953 upon his passing. They laid dormant for the next 32 years until Senora Rosa's husband transcribed them into a 91 page manuscript in 1985 describing Petrino's recollections, experiences, the problems facing the Italian immigrants, the "firsts" (first school, first macaroni factory, first wedding, first dance in a public hall, first hotel, etc.), problems with the Irish, politics, development of the "colonies" (wards), Branch Brook Park, and many more vignettes.....

I want to continue to provide you with some interesting sections of the manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

"I am writing this, my second history of the early Italian settlers of Newark, NJ.....I had no thought of writing a history – I did it to make it easy for me to answer questions. As we came from the different towns and provinces of Italy, people would ask me, ' Who is he and where did he come from'. So, I got it down in the best way I could to give their names. Later I made memorandums of happenings in the 'colonies'.

I felt sorry for the single men and those that left their families back home. I could see them with tin pails go to get food and take it to their lodgings to eat.

Chapter Two (excerpts)
*“How Did Your Father Know That There
Was a Newark?”*

My father, Angelo Maria (not Mario) Mattia was born in Calabritto, Avellino in 1840. He came to America in 1872 and settled in Newark. He arrived in NY City with 27 others from the same town. All but four were musicians....among them were three of my uncles. They played in the streets of New York and supported my father.

In the year that he lived in NY my father made the acquaintance of a few other s from his native town. Among them was Giuseppe Capuana....He was in the junk businessthey all lived on Crosby St. near Spring St. On Spring St was also Giovanni Franchi who had a fruit and cigar store.

My father many times had the desire of returning to Italy as work was hard to get....One night Giovanni Franchi told father that they were hiring plenty of people at the docks loading and unloading ships. He went to the Pennsylvania Railroad ferry slip. At the dock on West St. he was stopped and told to pay. “Pay for what”, he asked. He paid some pennies he had and went in.....He found that he was on a boat, and was soon told to get off....He stated to walk. Wherever there were carpenters at work he asked, “Boss, me work”, but was told no.

Father was of a somewhat stubborn nature. When he said no, he meant it....As he was walking he thought of his brothers-in-law and his paesani, insisting that he should not pick rags or be a zappatore (a digger)....He had his lunch with him.....He wanted water. He was tired of walking. He saw a wooden box and brought it to the side of the road. He sat on it and dozed off to sleep.

When he awoke he saw only sky and tall grass. He realized he was in a meadow....He walked and trucks passed him by....He wore earrings and a red bandana around his neck...no one offered him a ride. At last right in the back of him a surrey stopped with a man and woman in it. The man said in Italian, “Voi sei Italiano?” (Are you Italian?). “Si Signore”, he answered. The man asked where father was going. He answered “I am looking for work but can’t find any”. “Would you chop wood?” “Sure”, father responded, “I’ve been around wood all my life.” “All right, get in. You have a job”. The Italian’s name I never knew, but I do know that he was a godsend, not only for us but for all that followed.

On the way reaching Harrison (they called it East Newark at that time), the Italian brought father to a saloon where he got all the drinks he wanted. After crossing the Passaic River Bridge, the Italian said, “This is Newark. A nice town. You’ll like it.” They turned right on Broad St. and went to Morris and Essex Railroad Ave. (now called Lackawanna Ave.). The wood yard was midway between Plane and High Sts. The owner of the yard was Mr. John Strueble....Father was hired and that night ..and slept in the hay loft. In the morning as soon as daylight set in, father started to chop some wood..... Mr. Strueble brought father some breakfast. At dinner father got the first taste of corned beef and cabbage. Late that afternoon Mr. Strueble and his Italian brother-in-law came and told father to get into the carriage and drove to number 24 Boyden St. a two-story brick building. A small store was on the right and four rooms were on the second floor above it. On entering the rooms on the second floor right, was a kitchen stove, a few odd kitchen chairs, everything to cook with and a clean bed. “This”, said Mr Strueble through his brother-in-law, “is your home with a two-year lease”. 24 Boyden became the home of the first Italian colonizer and the colonies of Newark.

I have heard of many kindhearted men but none like Mr. John Strueble....God bless him for what he did for father. That is not all, for two years later he told father that the city was getting too big for him and started father in business for himself, which he did at 10 Boyden St.

(continued next month)

F. Cocchiola

Please forward any changes in email addresses, good & welfare items, questions for the Executive Committee or questions concerning the newsletter to me at fcoch@aol.com (Frank Cocchiola)