

NUTLEY UNICO

(nutleyunico.org)

MAY 2022 NEWSLETTER

Next Dinner Meeting
Thursday, June 2, 2022, 7:00 pm
at
Mama Vittoria

May Meeting/Events

- Tom Sposato presented the slate of officers for the 2022-23 year. They are Dan Carnicella (Pres), Danielle Mangello (1st VP), Pasquale Pisani (2nd VP), Frank Russo (3rd VP), Tom Sposato (Treas), Cathy Marucci (Sec), Sal Ferraro (Corr Sec),”Jr” Mascolo (Sgt at Arms) and Membrs at Large, Lenny Guglielmello and Anthony Biondi, Jr. The officers will be sworn in at the June 2 meeting.
- Joe Cervasio and Pat Ritacco were recognized for 25 years as chapter members.
- The Brian Piccolo Scholarship Breakfast was held on May 15. The two Piccolo winners were Matt Harbison (male) and Nicole Cicchetti (female). Additional scholarships awarded that day were the Battaglia (2), Cocchiola, Arcuti, (Piro, Zinna, Cifelli, Paris & Genitempo) legal firm and the Unico Vocational Scholarship. Thanks to all the families who donated scholarships in memory of family members. Thanks also to the chapter members who took the time to come out to the breakfast on a Sunday morning. The committee assisting with the event was Marie Solimo, Anthony Malfitano, Sal Ferraro, Michelle Fleitell, Denise DiBlasio, Phyllis Coldebella and Danielle Manganello.
- The guest speaker at the Piccolo Breakfast was Robert Belcuore, former All-American football player at the Univ. of Connecticut. What a great job he did relating his message to the 8 scholarship recipients and the adults in the room.
- Italian classes began on May 19 and continue to meet every Thursday at NHS. Thanks to Professore Chiara Russoniello who is doing a great job with conversational Italian. Chiara is volunteering her time as she has returned the \$50 registration fee to the Chapter as a fundraiser. Grazie!

Good & Welfare

- Bob & Linda Algieri’s daughter, Linda, and her husband, Carlos Gutierrez, welcomed a baby girl to the family on May 17. Congratulations to the proud parents and grandparents.

- The Chapter wishes to express its appreciation to the current officers, many of whom are continuing next year. A special thank you to outgoing President, Vito Maturro, who did a great job this past year.

Executive Committee

The committee will be meeting after this newsletter is being prepared.

Upcoming Events

- **May 30 (Monday) – Memorial Day Parade.** Our participation level at the St. Patrick’s Day Parade was very light. Let’s have a better showing for our veterans. We will assemble at the Park Oval at 10:30 am with an 11:00 step off. Cars are welcome. If you plan on bringing a vehicle please let us know.
- **June 14 (Tuesday) – Special Scholarship presentations.** This will be at 7:00 pm at Mama Vittoria. Refreshments will be cake, pastries, fruit, coffee, tea and soda. There will be no additional charge to members or guests.
- **June 26 (Sunday) – Bus ride to AC**
- **July 13 (Wednesday) – Christmas Eve in July. Save the Date! Details to follow.**
- **August 24 (Wednesday) – Annual Golf Outing (Hendricks)**

CULTURE & HERITAGE

As noted in previous newsletters, 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 Six

“The First Italians Arrested”

It was a Sunday afternoon. My father and Gaetano Guadiosi (known as Arovina Paesi) were walking on Washington Ave. towards Market St when they saw a crowd in front of the old Washington Hotel at the corner of Washington and Bank St. Curious to know what so many policemen were there for, they waited and soon the ‘Black Maria’ (a police wagon) came and the men and women were told to get in. Since Father and Gaetano were near the hotel they too were forced to take a ride with those arrested in the hotel as a disorderly house. But, later the two Italian men were released.

Chapter Seven (exerpts)

“The Poor School System of our Early Days”

There were no compulsory laws on education, and if there were they were not enforced. If a child was absent from school due to sickness or playing hookey the teacher would send him a note asking for a reason. It ended there because no one could read anyway. Truant officers were not known in Newark until many years later.

The young immigrants (greenhorns, as they were called) paid for most of the other bad boys’ actions. One day someone must have done something wrong but I was the one who got the blame. The Principal of State St. School was Miss Brookfield. She had brought me to some back room, rolled my pants to about the knee, and made me kneel on dry peas until my knees bled. I was afraid to tell my father for I didn’t know whether he would blame me or the teacher, so I left school. I went to Burnett St School but was told to go back to State St School because I was out of their district.

...Many times we children would get tired of hearing our parents complain about saving money. Little did we know that the saving was for us, children of the second generation. The third generation, our children, have taken good advantage of our schools, from the grammar schools to the colleges and universities. Not only as students, but also as teachers and professors. And what is more to their credit is that the vast majority, if not all, of them are descendants of people who earned money by the sweat of their brow.

Chapter Eight (exerpts)

“The First Italians Never Got Tired so They Had to have Gardens”

...I found that the average Italian never did like white cabbage. He liked curly green cabbage. So, he sent to Italy for seed. He couldn’t go to a seed store for he didn’t know how to ask for what he wanted. He also wanted finocchi (fennel) seed and basilica (basil), commonly called ‘basinicola’. A little later he sent for fig plants.

There were plenty of vacant lots in the old 15th ward (now the 1st ward) and also in the Ironbound and the 8th ward sections. While waiting for the seed they began to prepare the soil. Soon little farms were seen on Roseville Ave and that neighborhood. Many laughed at the idea of trying to grow anything in that ‘poor soil’ but the Italians didn’t laugh – only at those who laughed at them.

Horse manure was spread on the ground and by spring the ground was well fertilized. In a short time they raised more than they needed for their homes so they sold it...Soon thereafter small farms could be seen where vacant lots had been. Roseville Ave, as far as Springdale Ave, was mostly little farms that

brought a good revenue, which helped to buy the land they tilled and later to build homes on them. Between Summer Ave and Broadway (old Belleville Ave) opposite what was Kearny Estate and now the Normal School, until not many years ago was the farm in that neighborhood. A few are still to be seen on Lake St north of Bloomfield.Ave.

Chapter Nine (exerpts)

“The Stork’s First visit to an Italian of the Colonies

The first Italian baby in the colonies was born to Mr. and Mrs. Pietro Puglia on River St. (2nd Colony). A short time later, the first Italian died, who was also a Puglia. It was a child of a few years, but not the one that was just born. The second baby born in the colonies was to Mr. & Mrs. Antonio Gerard on Drift St (1st Colony)

..Women would go to the mother of the new born baby. They did not go empty-handed. It was a custom to bring a chicken, five pounds of sugar and some camolie used to make a fragrant tea. Not until the late 1890s was a doctor called. The first Italian midwife in New Jersey was Mrs. Celesta Adobatto, grandmother of the Adobattos of Newark and the sister of Pietro Puglia.

(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)