

NUTLEY UNICO

(*nutleyunico.org*)

JUNE 2022 NEWSLETTER

June Meeting/Events

- The new officers for the 2022-23 year sworn in on June 2 were 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
- Italian classes have ended. Professore Chiara Russoniello volunteered her time and she has returned the \$50 registration fee to the Chapter as a fundraiser. Grazie!
- At the June 2 meeting the Mario DiMaggio Scholarship was presented to Paul Scutti and the Amy Bonadonna scholarships were awarded to Max Lamonaco and Caitlin Mendoza.
- Additional scholarships were presented at a special dinner meeting on June 14. They were the Crupi Scholarship (Adrianna Argenziano), Martini Scholarship (Stephanie Luberto), Piro Scholarship (Lia DeMaio), Nanina's Scholarship (Nikki Cocuzza), Biondi Scholarship (Michael Beck), Scarpelli Scholarship (Isabel Saccente), Pennoni Scholarship (Ella Gencarelli), Kelly Scholarship (Allison Scorsone) and Ritacco Scholarship (Frankie Contella). Congratulations to all and thank you to the donors.
- A final thank you to Alan Genitempo and his committee for their work with the scholarships. Alan's leadership has been exemplary.

Good & Welfare

- Rich Rubino's daughter, Jacqueline, received the Unico National \$2,500 Ralph Torracco Scholarship for Therapy Services. She will study Speech Pathology. Congrats!
- Vito Mattura's daughter, Victoria, will wed Matt Bernardo on July 22.

Executive Committee

The committee met on June 22.

- National
 - Convention is July 27-31 in New Orleans.
 - Our first half National dues are due by July 1.
- District
 - The next District meeting will be Tuesday, June 28 in Lodi
 - Our Chapter donated \$100 to the District for its sponsorship of the 2023 Heritage and Photo Calendar, as was done in prior years.
- Chapter Business
 - Christmas Eve in July on July 13 – SOLD OUT.

- Golf Outing on Wednesday, Aug 24, at Hendrick's, Belleville. Lunch and diner will be catered by the Chandelier. Details will follow shortly. We are soliciting hole sponsors (\$100). Anyone wanting to just attend the dinner is welcome. It will be at 5:00 and will be \$50. This is a BYOB event.
- Thanks to all who participated in the Memorial Day Parade.
- **The first meeting of the coming year will be Thursday, Sept. 8.**
- The 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award (Phil Cuzzi) and Mille Grazie (Maurice Ferraro) will be presented in the fall.
- Several options devoted to attempting to solicit new members were discussed. The committee will address this later this summer. It is important to remember that we are not a chapter that needs to increase membership in quantity, but new, committed members are always welcome.
- There will be an effort to encourage participation in a committee in Sept. Committees will be laid out on a table with sign-in sheets for volunteers.

Upcoming Events

- **July 13** (Wednesday) – Christmas Eve in July.
- **August 24** (Wednesday) – Annual Golf Outing (Hendricks)
- **Sept 8** (Thursday) – First meeting of the new year.

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 Ten **“How Most Italians got their Mail”**

Many letters came from Italy with only “Nevarca (Newark) on them... Few came with postage paid. ..Many letters would not have been received at all had it not been for the newspaper, the Newark Sunday Call. It published a list of the letters in the dead letter office. The Newark Post Office was a small building on Academy St, a little above Broad St, in the 1890s. I think I was the youngest mail carrier in the US. I would go to the Post Office with a list of the letters wanted. At first they would not give them to me. Our mailman fixed that. My first stop was River St, then to John Frank. I went home and at night people called for their mail.

Chapter Eleven **“Holy days and Holidays”**

In the early days of our Italian settlers here in Newark, the holy days...were observed in the old traditional ways as handed down by our ancestors. That was in a strictly religious sense and not in a commercialized way as of today. Those who could afford it bought new clothing for the children, and some inexpensive toys. The clothing was used as the Sunday clothes for the rest of the year.

The buying of expensive gifts by a fiance did not come into use until well into the middle 1890s. Amongst the Italians the men gave only a pair of earrings, and in return the girl would give him a scarf or a pair of socks she knitted for him.

No Christmas was complete without zeppole, a sort of doughnut without seasoning, but with a bit of anchovy in it.

The women were busy making pastry, for there were no Italian pastry shops in Newark until 1886. Alfonso Sabilia started the first one, on the corner of 8th Ave and Sheffield St.

Carnivale, the day before Ash Wednesday, was special too. The Italians here, like those of Italy, held fast to the old tradition of costuming and plenty of dancing. The neighbors thought the Italians were late to celebrate Halloween, and the Italians thought the others celebrated Carnivale too early.

As to the 4th of July, the very first pioneers did not know what all the shooting and fireworks were for. But their love of fireworks made them soon join the others to celebrate whatever it was for.

Thanksgiving Day was the most baffling of all the holidays. Chickens, turkeys, and fowl---why have a feast when they are killed. Some Italian with an odd sense of humor, told his friends that it is the Feast of the Chickens (La Festa de la Gallina) and for several years, or until the children explained what it really meant, it was celebrated as such. Later many had a good laugh on what they themselves thought was a stupid thing – for chickens to have a feast day. But the early pioneers were like the little children going to the kindergarten to learn.

Chapter Twelve

“Divorce”

A divorce in Italy was known by the early Italian settlers more by name than anything else. Anyone who may be in doubt should know that in Italy divorce is not given by church or state except for only two reasons. First, for adultery. Secondly, for extreme cruelty. An Italian lawyer in Italy said, ‘In Italy adultery must be proved beyond a doubt. Separation in Italy does not mean that one looked cross-eyed at the other’. In the 1890s a man by the name of Alfonso Vellco married Grazia Scala, and decided to get a divorce. But the people shamed them, so they left for Boston and got divorced there. The wife was a sister of Sal Scala, the barber of Garside St.

Chapter Thirteen

“Our First Dance in a Public Hall”

The Italians and the French decided to have a dance together. The dance was held in the Washington Hall on Washington St (now Brandford Pl). It took place in April of 1888, and it was a gala night. I was ten years old at the time but I remember it as though it was held last night. There was a lot of merrymaking, as all the men and women came dressed in their native peasant dresses. There were more colors than I have on my paint palette. Men in short knee breeches with colorful stockings were there. For a few weeks before the dance, many French and Italians rehearsed their music, which consisted of an accordion, a mandolin and a guitar. A few of the Frenchmen knew Italian because they worked in silk mills in Italy. Here they did not know much English so they became ragpickers. Later they worked in a silk mill on Bank St, and after that the weavers went to Paterson.

The dance was enjoyed by all, and the French liked the tarentella the best. Spectators were many, and the owner of the hall was so pleased that he offered the hall free. At the dance, the Mazzzei brothers offered to play for free. They later became well known. That dance led to the formation of the first society in Newark, ‘La liberta Italiana etrangersa societa’. Unfortunately most have left this city and the society went out of existence.

To be continued... ..

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)