

## Finding Your Italian Ancestors

### Your Research in the U.S.

- No central location for records in Italy
- Find town or parish in Italy immigrant ancestor came from
- Identified to their town, province, region
- Perform an exhaustive search of all records relating to your ancestor and family in the U.S.
- Run into a brick wall? Utilize the FAN method (Friends/Family, Associates, Neighbors)

### Gather information from all U.S. sources including:

- Vital records
- Census records
- Voter lists and registration
- Cemetery records
- Naturalization records
- Church records
- Passenger lists, etc.
- Checked with ethnic genealogical societies
- Use social media groups

### The Voyage To America

- Three classes of steam ship travel (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- Third steerage
- Most Italian immigrants sailed steerage
- By 1900s, typical steerage ticket \$25-\$30
- Common for husband to come first, work, save money for family to come over
- Walk, cart, railway from home to port of departure
- Port stay could be several days or weeks depending on when the ship left
- Subjected to a health examination
- Prior to boarding, baggage inspected, fumigated and tagged
- Nearly two weeks traveling to port like New York, Baltimore, Boston, or New Orleans
- Men and women separated and no privacy
- Meals were substandard and little drinking water
- When arrived, Immigration Service inspect the passengers for signs of illness before allowed to dock

## **Boundaries changed over time**

### **Civil Registration Begins**

- These records do not exist for areas that Napoleon never ruled
- In 1806 Napoleon took over Northern Italy and enforced local civil registration
- Some areas continued to keep civil registration records after Napoleon's defeat
- Sicilia began civil registration in 1820 using a format similar to the Napoleonic records
- The registers are divided into separate volumes for each year
- The records, usually in Italian, except for records kept during the rule of foreign powers
- In the northern regions, many records are in French and German

### **Births (nati/nascite)**

- Child's name
- Sex
- Birth date and birthplace
- Parents' names
- Registered within a day or so of birth
- Corrections may be added as a marginal note, marriage or death information

### **Marriages (matrimoni)**

- 1809 Napoleonic law required marriages performed and recorded by civil authorities
- Some continued to have marriages performed by the church only
- Marriages usually performed/recorded where the bride lived

### **Marriage Banns, Proclamations, Allegations (pubblicazioni, notificazioni, memorandum)**

- A few weeks before the wedding
- Supporting documents (processetti or allegati)
  - Records proving their births
  - Their parents' births/deaths
  - Found together in volume or separately



### **Deaths (morte/morti)**

- Age
- Place of birth
- Residence
- Occupation
- Names of spouses and parents and if they are living
- Usually registered within a day of death where the person died

### **Births (nati/nascite)**

- First paragraph establishes date, time, the registrar's information and town
- Reporter (midwife or father), name, age, occupation, residence, time, date, location, mother
- Mother's information, child's information, Witnesses information, signatures

### **Death (morte/morti)**

- First paragraph establishes date, time, the registrar's information and town
- Person information reporting death
- Deceased information
- Witnesses information, signatures

### **Marriage Banns**

- Registration information
- Groom's information
- Bride's information
- Reading of civil code
- Witnesses information, signatures

### **Where to find records**

- Family Search Library – online
- Ancestry – index only
- The Portale Antenati (Ancestors Portal) - Italian National Archives
- Archivio di Stato websites (lists what they have)
- Surnames in Italy – directories/links to other resources
- ItaliaNames – shows distribution of surnames in Italy
- Write (in Italian) to the provincial archive where the record would be