

## Lockport Area

# Genealogical & Historical Society

2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Volume 2, No.3

MARCH

2002



"Preserving the Past  
is our Present  
to the Future"

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Bonnie Packley, treasurer  
1016 Maitland Drive  
Lockport, IL 60441

## Message from the President

Greetings, and Top O' the Mornin' to ye—  
and the Rest of the Day to You.

In March, we are pleased to have Georgene Bankroff speak to us about the Irish community and its impact on St. Dennis Church. We will meet in the basement of the church for a brief meeting, then Georgene will take us on a tour. We are looking forward to this program with our society's historian and author of a book on the history of St. Dennis.

Our program in February focused on the Asiago connection to our community. Many families are descendants of immigrants from this northern region of Italy. Other families in Lockport hail from other areas of the country and from Sicily. Many of our members spoke about their family's Italian heritage and brought wonderful memorabilia to the Share & Tell. Georgene spoke about her memories of a trip she took to Italy in 1984. She has recounted her story in this issue.

As we plan our 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book, we recall how our ancestors faced countless hardships on their way to improving their lot in Lockport. We will dedicate our book to them and to us present "pioneers" who are unafraid to challenge life's hurdles. Whatever our lot becomes, we hope that our book will provide a splendid resource that will inspire future generations to face whatever troubled times they may encounter, and perhaps, to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Dr. Reno G. Caneva, DPM

All other correspondence: LAGHS / "The House in the Park," 1911 S. Lawrence. Lockport, IL 60441



## "Asiago-Italian Heritage"

Reno Caneva takes a picture of a map of Italy while Georgene Bankroff starts off the Share & Tell with recollections from her trip to Asiago. **See story below.**

Bonnie and Frank Packely, Char Giardina, Marge Haack, and Reno Caneva set out a buffet of Asiago cheese-topped breads, Fontini cheeses, grapes, and Italian sweet treats.



### Asiago: a city for all seasons

BY GEORGENE BANKROFF

**A**siago! A city in Italy that my mother talked about ever since I was a child. Little did I think that my first view of this mountain city would be through the rain-spattered window of a bus trudging its way up 3000 ft. into the Dolomite Mountains from Vicenza, the capital of the province in the Po Valley.

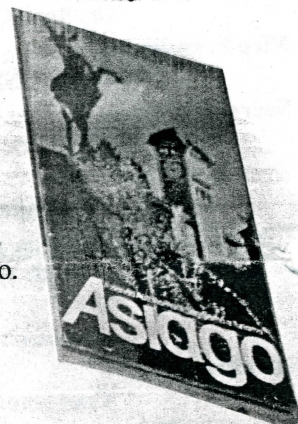
The word Asiago was always spoken with reverence in our home because it was the birthplace of most of the American-Italians living in Lockport. It was THE place to visit if you got to Italy.

My grandfather, Giovanni (John) Rodeghiero and his three brothers, Anthony, Christian, and Andrew left their family and settled in the New World, circa 1884. In 1886 my g.grandfather, Giuseppe (Joseph) Rigoni, his wife Maria, and their 16 year-old daughter Antonia (my grandmother) came to the U.S. also. Bad economic conditions were reasons enough for looking for a better life. On November 17, 1888 John and Antonia (Lena), who had been neighbors in Asiago, were the first Italian couple to be married at St. Dennis Church by Dr. James McGovern.

The dream of visiting the city of my Italian ancestors came to fruition in August of 1984, shortly after the disastrous fire at Union Oil. After having spent a few days in Rome and Venice, we left the gondolas and cathedrals behind us, boarded a train, and left for

Vicenza and then Asiago. Since neither of my friends had any interest in Italian genealogy, I was left on my own to find what genealogy I could in only one day. The first thing Friday morning I was off in the rain to the court house only to be told to come back after lunch. I thought that I was getting the run-around, but it turned out that they really were busy issuing passports, etc.

Because I had the morning free, I walked to the Rigoni and Rodeghiero communes. These are new since World War II. Someone approached me as I sloshed through the wet street in the Rigoni commune. I said one word, "Rigoni," and pointed to myself, and I was immediately invited into their home. They spoke no English; I spoke no Italian; and my college French didn't work. So I said "Chicago," and they began to put up their hands in a machine gun position. I laughed, said "No," and they laughed, also.



I needed to get back to the court house so I tramped down the hill in a downpour. When a nice young man in a little car offered to pick me up, I didn't hesitate. After all who could possibly be interested in an old lady wearing a raincoat, scarf, and sensible shoes. It turned out that his name was Pesavento. A long-lost cousin? I'll never know.

After lunch when I arrived at the court house, I again tried to speak French, but the young clerk shook his head no. Then I pulled out my family pedigree chart, and he took one look at the Rigoni section, and said, "Soot." It wasn't until many years later that I found out the meaning of the word. It appears that our family was made up of charcoal makers. The fuel was then shipped to factories to fire the furnaces in big cities.

I had to write all the genealogy data from ancient books by hand because they had no copy machine. Then I pointed to my Rodeghiero line and he shook his head. I realize that the whole town was bombed level in WWII, but I can't fathom why they would have

See ASIAGO, next page



# NEWS You Can Use !



## Chasing Your Tale—genealogy tips

By Jacqueline Munch  
LAGHS GENEALOGIST

**The chase is on: let's get started !**

**Always start with yourself** and work backwards! Gather information by talking to all your family members. This is essential before going to the internet or libraries! Doing this will help prevent wasted time and effort in your research.

**Write down your information** on a Family Group Sheet (available at our meetings). **Record full names** - surnames in all CAPS - including maiden names. **List dates** in this order: day, month, year. **Write locations in order:** City, County, State Record sources of your information—**VERY IMPORTANT!**

Beginning genealogy lessons are available on the internet, such as Rootsweb Guide to Tracing Family Trees on [rootsweb.com](http://rootsweb.com).

**LEGACY**, a computer program for recording your family tree, is available for free at [Legacyfamilytree.com](http://Legacyfamilytree.com). I have heard many good comments about this program. Try the free program, and if you like it, you can upgrade at a minimal fee.

**Good genealogy websites that include many links and resources.**

[www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)  
[www.progenealogists.com/genealogysleuthb.htm](http://www.progenealogists.com/genealogysleuthb.htm)  
(near top of this site is a link to their international site)  
[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)  
[www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com)  
[www.genforum.com](http://www.genforum.com)  
[www.usgenweb.org/thestates.html](http://www.usgenweb.org/thestates.html)  
[www.censusdiggins.com](http://www.censusdiggins.com)

**State of Illinois Archives**  
[www.sos.state.il.us/departments/archives/databases.html](http://www.sos.state.il.us/departments/archives/databases.html)

**Immigrants through port of New York from 1892-1924**

[www.ellislandrecords.com](http://www.ellislandrecords.com)

**Italian genealogy web sites**

[www.Italianroots.com](http://www.Italianroots.com)  
[www.arduini.net/tools/01.htm](http://www.arduini.net/tools/01.htm)  
[www.genealogyspot.com/country/italy.htm](http://www.genealogyspot.com/country/italy.htm)  
[www.rootsweb.com/~itawgw/index.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~itawgw/index.html)

**Free translations of text or web pages**

[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)  
Over 800 dictionaries in 160 languages  
[www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com)

I have access to many census records and will be glad to do "lookups" for one ancestor at a time after you have gathered as much information as you can about that person. I will also be glad to help those without computers in their research.

Contact me at: 838-3795 or  
[jlmunch@earthlink.net](mailto:jlmunch@earthlink.net)

### ASIAGO

Rigoni information and not Rodeghiero. I am still pursuing that puzzle.

Because of the heat in the valley, hundreds of Lowland Italians were vacationing in Asiago, and in the evening even in the rain the tourists were trooping up and down the main street window shopping. I did manage to flash our charge cards a few times and had a short visit to St. Mateo Church.

My only full day in Asiago was spent mainly dodging

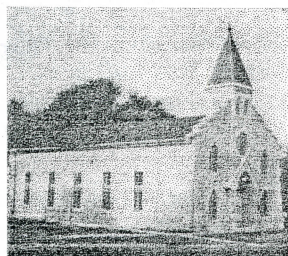
raindrops and tracing ancestors. That was the main reason that I made a huge detour from Venice to Asiago and then to Germany. The War Memorial, churches, relatives, and war museums would have to wait for another trip.

Early the next morning we set sail in a limo from Asiago down through the Brenner Pass, into Germany and to Oberramagau for our observation of the Passion Play. All the actors spoke German! Not to worry; we unfortunately knew the sorrowful outcome.

Fini



## **Gladys Fox Museum**



### **Upcoming Meetings**

Membership Meeting      March 23      8:30 am  
Gladys Fox Museum, corner of 9<sup>th</sup> & Washington

Board Meeting      April 13      8:30 am  
"The House in the Park" in Dellwood Park

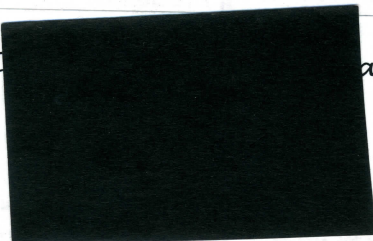
**SEE INSERT FOR MARCH PROGRAM:**

*LOCKPORT IRISH AND TOUR OF ST. DENNIS CHURCH*

### **Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society**

"The House in the Park"  
c/o Lockport Township Park District  
1911 S. Lawrence Street  
Lockport, IL 60441

For information:  
Bonnie Packley  
(815) 838. 9388





# Lockport Area Genealogical & Historical Society



Photo: Sean Ellison, Kelvin Grove School, 2001

Saturday  
March 23, 2002  
meeting  
and  
special  
program

8:30 am

## **Lockport Irish and Tour of St. Dennis Church with Georgene Bankroff**

Georgene will sign copies of her book on St. Dennis.

**Meet at the Old St. Dennis Church Hall  
at 12<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton**

**RSVP is essential: call Bonnie at 838.9388**

NOTE: Program will be cancelled if there is a funeral.

Need a ride? Call Bonnie