



Italian Historical Society of America

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BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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Tutto Italiano **Benvenuto a Tutto Italiano**

The legend of the [Witches of Benevento](#) dates back to the fourth century BC with the [Samnites](#), who made their home in the center of Italy – in the Apennines – south of Rome. Comprised of several tribes, they may have settled in the area as early as 500 BC, and it's noted they were the first to identify the land as Italy. About 30 miles northwest of Naples, [Benevento](#) was an ideal location for settlement: on a hill between two rivers, overlooking the surrounding valleys and protected on three sides by mountains.

Benevento was the capital city of the Samnites, but after numerous battles, it was taken over by the Romans in the third century BC. Then, the name of the town was Maleventum (earlier Maloenton) and the new rulers changed it to Beneventum – from “bad wind” to “good wind,” to celebrate their victory. The strategic location of Benevento already had several roads passing by, but after Roman conquest, [Via Appia](#) was extended east (as Via Traiana) from Beneventum, and ran parallel with the coast south to Brindisi. The road into the city went through [Trajan's Arch](#), named after the emperor who had it built.

The witches may have first gathered in tribute to the Egyptian goddess Isis, or to Hecate – goddess of sorcery and of many other attributes. With Lombard rule in the sixth century, their pagan rituals were blended with the earlier practices of the Samnites, and the Lombard warriors' custom of encircling a tree was added to the witches' ceremony. Various versions of the legend continue, but one tangible outcome remains – [Liquore Strega](#) (witch in Italian). Created in Benevento in 1860, the liqueur is a blend of almost 70 herbs and spices, tinted with saffron, and aged in ash barrels.

[The Witches of Benevento and the Magic Walnut Tree](#)

[The Witches of Benevento and their Walnut Tree Sabbath or Treguenda](#)

[Benevento - One of Campania's Secrets](#)

[Benevento From Above](#) (YouTube Video)

[Things to See in Benevento](#)

[The Two Beneventos](#)

[Halloween in Italy](#)

[All Saints and All Souls Day in Italy](#)

[Rome's Ghosts](#)

[Italian Superstitions](#)

The Corpse Flower

Amorphophallus titanum is native to Sumatra, Indonesia, and one of the largest and most foul-smelling plants in the world. Today, it's cultivated worldwide, but because

the tropical plant requires high humidity and warm temperatures, it is generally grown in greenhouses in botanic gardens.

The [corpse flower](#) was discovered in 1878 by Italian botanist [Odoardo Beccari](#), who studied in Italy, and after graduating spent some time at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew where he met Charles Darwin and Sir James Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak (Malaysia). Beccari first traveled to Sarawak in 1865 and stayed three years, exploring the islands of Malaysia and Indonesia. He returned in 1878, this time finding *Amorphophallus titanium*.

Beccari published numerous articles and books about the plants of southeast Asia, and briefly held the position of Director at the Florence Botanic Garden. In 2017, a [plant he discovered in 1867](#) and thought to be extinct was rediscovered.

From the Italian American Press

The [Italian American Press](#) offers a great selection of books – childrens, memoirs, art, history, food, the supernatural, the natural beauty of Italy, and more – for every interest. Help preserve Italian American heritage and history. Support authors of Italian heritage who write about Italian American and Italian culture and let them know you found their books on the Italian American Press.

[Read the book review for *The Ghosts of the Garfagnana: Seven Strange Stories from Haunted Tuscany* at *La Gazzetta Italiana*.](#)

Celebrate Italian American Heritage Month

[Read books about the history and the culture of Italians in America.](#)

***Christopher Columbus The Hero* by Rafael**

With documented facts and resources, this well-researched book examines the assertions against Columbus and offers a specific response to each claim.

***Famous Italians You Probably Never Heard Of* by Peter V. Tafuri**

Written in chronological order, starting with the ancient Greek colonies in Italy and ending in the twentieth century, the author provides accounts of various “superstars in the Italian galaxy” – its people, places, and culture.

***The Italian Achievement: An A to Z of Over 1000 "Firsts" Achieved by Italians* by Arturo Barone**

The fourth edition – originally published as *Italians First* – provides a list of Italian accomplishments affecting every aspect of life and several chapters on the history of Italy and its people.

***Italian-American Fusion* by John C. Liburdi**

Filled with interesting facts about the strong and beneficial Italian influence on the character of America.

Learn about an Italian immigrant's contribution to America

[Out of Rushmore's Shadow - The Luigi Del Bianco Story](#) by Lou Del Bianco

The incredible story of Luigi Del Bianco, the chief carver of Mount Rushmore, told by his namesake and grandson, Lou Del Bianco. Filled with historic documents and photographs, and family memorabilia, the book chronicles three stories – the carving of Mount Rushmore, the life of Luigi Del Bianco, and Lou's quest to have his grandfather recognized as the chief carver of Mount Rushmore.

Italian American Heritage Project

Was Columbus responsible for connecting European and American continents or to blame for wiping out native populations? A new article addressing the relationship between Columbus and the natives, the Columbian Exchange, and views on Columbus – then and now – will be posted on the IAHP website soon.

From the book [The History of the Small Pox by James Moore](#) (Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of London, Director of the National Vaccine Establishment), published in 1815 (p.105): “We have now reached the close of the Fifteenth century; after which, from the revival of literature, better information is given of historical transactions, and the effects of Small Pox and Measles, when introduced into new countries, are fully narrated.” Moore continues (p.106): “But this evil is not to be charged to the great and good Columbus, whose humanity prompted him to always benefit, and never to injure the countries he discovered.”

Moore notes, “Hispaniola, or St. Domingo, was the first settlement founded by Columbus: after he was gone [Columbus died in 1506], numbers of adventurers flocked thither, whose hearts were hardened by avarice and fanaticism. The safety of the Indians never entered the thoughts of these men; and it is ascertained that the Small Pox and Measles were carried to that island in 1517.” Moore states “the Spaniards ... pretended to be civilized ... (p.107) in reducing them [Indians] to Christianity and slavery, immense numbers were massacred by fire arms and blood hounds: when resistance ceased, the wretched Indians having excessive tasks imposed upon them, and being forced to work in the mines, were consumed with labor and famine: and the remainder of this hapless race were totally extinguished by the Measles and Small Pox.”

Read my article [The Plight of Columbus and Italian Americans](#) on the IAHP website.

[The Great Myths](#) by John Mancini, Director Italic Institute of America.

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America; Italian Americans do not have an organized defense. The statements of truth and facts posted on so many Italian American websites are not working. Italian Americans need a nationwide program to battle the campaign to abolish Columbus Day or it will be lost; even though Indigenous People already have a designated day, and Native Americans have a day and a month to celebrate their culture.

Native American Month – November
Native American Heritage Day – November 28
Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

Visit the [IAHP website](#) to read my articles, learn about the lesson plans, see the resources I've used, and support my work. Donate for a cause – preserving Italian heritage and Italian American history and culture through education. [All donations are tax-deductible.](#)

Thirty-One Days of Italians

Since 2007, [Thirty-One Days of Italians](#) matches a person of Italian heritage who has greatly contributed to America with each day in October, Italian American Heritage Month.

For the [2019-2020 List](#), updated biographies and new resources have been added for Father Michael Accolti, Helen Barolini, Joseph Barbera, Yogi Berra, Giovanni Caboto, Joe DiMaggio, Geraldine Ferraro, Lee Iacocca, Fiorello La Guardia, Vince Lombardi, Henry Mancini, Rocky Marciano, Dean Martin, and Frank Sinatra. Learn about them and the 15 Honorary Members (on the List every year) and celebrate your Italian heritage.

This year, the [National Italian American Foundation](#) (NIAF) is posting a biography from the List each day on all its social media platforms. If you are a member of NIAF and receive the messages, please share.

On The Radio

West Coast Italian Radio (WCIR), based near Seattle, is hosted by Tony La Stella and

