



# Italian Historical Society of America

## Newsletter

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BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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### **Tutto Italiano** **Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano***

In the early years of the Roman Empire, the ancient city of Ostia was established at the mouth of the [Tiber River](#). Then, [Ostia Antica](#) was a major port city where the Tiber opened into the Tyrrhenian Sea. For several centuries, the city flourished, but a new, larger port and a decrease in shipping activities were the beginning of its decline. As the decades passed, the city became covered with silt that also extended the coastline. Now, the ruins of the city are about two miles inland, uncovered through major excavations that started in the [early twentieth century](#).

The fourth emperor of Rome, [Ancus Marcius](#) who ruled from c. 642 BC to 617 BC, is credited as the founder of Ostia. The city of Rome was growing and, in addition to supplies brought in by ships, it needed protection against attacks by sea. The area had been known for its salt pans – as salt was used to preserve food – and [warehouses stored the salt and other goods](#), then transported to Rome, about 20 miles northeast, through the Tiber by towboats or by cart on [Via Ostiensis](#).

At first, Ostia was a military fortress, later it also became a commercial port, with a large area near the harbor created for the merchants that sold, imported, and exported goods. As Rome grew – both in land and population – its need for grain increased substantially and larger ships were needed to carry the grain from North Africa and Egypt. With its closest deep-water port at [Puteoli](#) (now Pozzuoli) on the Bay of Naples, the logistics for transporting goods was cumbersome.

The port at Ostia could not handle the increased activity and during the reign of [Emperor Claudius](#) (41 AD to 54 AD), construction began on a [deep-water artificial port](#), several miles north of Ostia. Also north of the Tiber, it was connected by a canal to the river to bring goods northeast to Rome. [Portus](#) – now also about two miles from the Tyrrhenian Sea – became a major port for Rome, and over time, Ostia became more residential.

As Rome evolved through hundreds of years of rulers and battles, so did Ostia; and the port was eventually abandoned. During the Middle Ages, marble used to build Ostia was removed and reused and the site was ransacked for artifacts; most were held in private collections, but are now in museums. By the early 1800s, a systematic approach to excavating began, and in the early 1900s, scientific studies were being conducted. While the history of Ostia is tied to its founding during the 600s BC, no buildings from that era have been found. Today, both Ostia and Portus are archeology sites.

During construction – from 1958 to 1960 – of the [Leonardo da Vinci- Fiumicino International Airport](#), located next to the site of Portus (and near Ostia), numerous ship wrecks were found. They are displayed at the [Museum of Roman Ships](#).

[Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica](#)

[Ostia Antica: An Introduction](#)

[Baths at Ostia](#)

[Ostia Antica](#) (360 View)

[A Peek into Ancient Rome at Ostia Antica](#)

[Porto](#) (Portus)

[Portus Project](#)

[The Port of Claudius](#)

[Museum of the Roman Ships at Fiumicino](#)

[Artifact From Caligula's Ship Found to Be a Coffee Table in New York Apartment](#)

### **Italian American Press**

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – culture, history, memoirs, art, family, 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.

### **New on the Italian American Press**

[Being Brothers by Mike DeLucia](#)

A screenplay forms a novel about two estranged brothers, and takes the reader on a journey exploring family, friendships, life lessons, and the profound impact of the past.

### **Italian American Heritage Project**

[Recent news articles about Columbus](#) (We the Italians)

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America. Italian American organizations have recognized the “need to find ways to work together to save Columbus Day and protect our heritage from this onslaught of anti-Italian American bias.”

Resources and sample letters are now available to download (as PDFs) at [Know Columbus](#). However, the statements of truth and facts posted on so many Italian American websites must be publicized and widely distributed, otherwise, they will not work. The Italian American community needs to act quickly on a nationwide program in the battle against 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.

Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

Native American Month – November

Native American Heritage Day – Friday after Thanksgiving

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](#).

### **Italian American News**

[Italian Americans Unite Across Our Country](#) (La Gazzetta Italiana; April 2021)

[New Jersey Estate Owned by Napoleon's Older Brother Set to Become State Park](#) (smithsonianmag.com; March 23, 2021) *Thanks, Joe.*

[Rediscovering Columbus](#) (Fra Noi; March 23, 2021)

## News about Italy

[Italy wants Nivola statues returned after NYC removal](#) (Italian American Herald; April 1, 2021)

Biblical films span a century of Italian cinema (Fra Noi; March 23, 2021)

[The Little-Known Story of Violet Gibson, the Irish Woman Who Shot Mussolini](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/violet-gibson-the-irish-woman-who-shot-mussolini-180973789/)  
(smithsonianmag.com; March 22, 2021)

Casu marzu: The world's 'most dangerous' cheese (cntravel; updated March 18, 2021) *Thanks, Joe.*

Emperor's mosaic displayed in Italy after stint as NYC table (AP; March 11, 2021)

*Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,*  
Janice

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