



Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

JUNE 2021

BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 6

Tutto Italiano Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano*

This year marks the [1600th anniversary](#) of the founding of Venice. It's noted the "[official foundation date of Venice has been set on March 25, 421 at noon](#)," but that [date has been disputed](#). (This source states it was [settled in 568](#).) By all accounts, the city began as a refuge for native tribes fleeing barbarians, and the first settlement was on [Torcello](#), about five miles northeast of Venice.

Because of its location, Venice was a difficult city to seize, but its isolation made it an independent region that eventually elected its own leader. As with the history of Italy, and so many of its villages and cities, Venice has a convoluted past. Numerous sources provide various versions on the details of early dates, names, and events.

Generally, after the first doge was elected, at some point the seat of government was moved from Torcello to – what is now – the Historic Center of Venice. With an increase in population, businesses opened, and the area, known as the Rialto, soon became an economic hub. Merchant trading increased, with products from the East (spices and silk) becoming more valuable commodities.

In the late 820s, the [relics of Saint Mark](#) were brought to the doge and plans to build the Basilicata began. With more visitors attracted to the area, the influx in commerce increased the power of Venice. Ships were built, crusades were launched, Eastern trade increased, battles were fought, and Venice continued to prosper. (Venetian native Marco Polo left Venice in 1271 to travel through the East with his father and uncle.)

By the late Middle Ages, the [Venice Arsenale](#) was building commercial and military vessels through mass production; and for three centuries, numerous extensions and reconstructions would make the Arsenale the center of power for the Republic of Venice. In 1797, Napoleon invaded Venice and the doge abdicated. Venice twice came under Austrian rule, reemerged as a Republic for a short time in the 1840s, and then agreed to be part of the Italian Kingdom in 1866. During this time, Venice was on the [Grand Tour](#), a months- to years-long journey for those with the time and money to travel through Europe.

Today, the spotlight is still on Venice, and one of its most urgent concerns: regulating tourism and cruise ships. For many years, residents of Venice have been calling for a manageable approach to welcoming tourist while providing a habitable environment for its residents, and for safeguarding the structure of the islands and its buildings. It appears the Italian government is listening, as it recently invited residents to participate in discussions for solutions.

Read my article, "[The Cruise Ships of Venice](#)," posted on *La Gazzetta Italiana* to learn more about what local residents are saying. In the article you'll find details about the recent cruise ship ban, with commentary by Guido Molto, founder and editor of the [Venice-based magazine ytalj](#). On June 2nd, the magazine posted an [open letter](#) from the "international non-profit organization" [Venetian Heritage](#), addressed to "the head of state and the government" requesting "a special statute ... to protect the physical integrity and cultural identity" of Venice. (The letter is in Italian and can be translated

using an online conversion tool.)

[How Does Venice Work?](#) (Scroll down for Vimeo video.)

[Venezia e le Grandi Navi](#) (Venice and the Great Ships)

Book published in 2015: Photographer Gianni Berengo Gardin documents “the relationship between the city of Venice and the giant cruise ships that pass in the lagoon. In Italian.

[Parco Turistico di Cavallino Treporti](#) (Barrier peninsula northeast of Venice)

[The Churches of Venice](#)

[Passion Italy: Veneto](#) (YouTube Video)

[The Ferrari Horse Logo Made in Murano](#) (Vimeo) *Thanks, Louise.*

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

[Tony Lazzeri Yankees Legend and Baseball Pioneer by Lawrence Baldassaro](#)

A key member of the New York Yankees’ legendary Murderers’ Row lineup between 1926 and 1937, Tony Lazzeri – the forgotten Yankee – helped the team win six American League pennants and five World Series titles; and was one of the most respected players of his time.

Books About Venice

Visit the [Travel](#) section on the IAP to find a variety of books about Venice. JoAnn Locktov edited three books that showcase the beauty of Venice. Kathleen Ann González wrote and edited several books; her most recent *Venice Rising: Aqua Gnanda, Pandemic, Rebirth*, a collection of stories reflecting on the past, present, and future of Venice.

Italian American Heritage Project

The news is not good for Columbus Day. Last month, two school boards – one in New Jersey and one in New York (the largest in the United States) – replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day on the school calendar. Both decisions were made without any discussions or input from parents and residents.

Shortly after the changes were made public, a [petition to the Randolph Board of Education](#) and a petition to “[Take Action & Halt the Bigotry](#)” (for New York residents only) were started. Spokespersons for both boards cite the need for diversity and inclusion, yet their decisions alienate Italian American students; and even more ironic, New York and New Jersey are two states with the highest populations of Italian Americans.

The foundation of Italian American heritage starts with the beginning of Italy’s history – before it was Italy – and continues through the onslaughts of tribes, groups, and clans; and the numerous reigns, monarchies, and political entities that caused many Italians to leave the land where they were born and make the arduous journey to America.

How can Italian Americans turn from being reactive to being proactive? We need a nationwide education program, starting with educating others about Columbus; [lesson plans here](#). Contact your local school board and government officials. Inform them that

the United Nations established August 9th as [International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#) (that includes the United States).

November is [Native American Heritage Month](#), “The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans.”

Learn about your Italian heritage and share your knowledge with family and friends of all nationalities. Learn about Italian American history. To start, visit the [Research Library of the Italic Institute of America](#) to view its collection of resources.

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.

Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

Native American Heritage 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

[Philip DiNovo, Founder and President of the American Italian Heritage Association and Museum](#) (YouTube Video; June 2, 2021)

[Man Responsible For Beheading Columbus Statue Ordered To Pay Cost Of Repair](#) (WNPR.com; May 18, 2021)

[Italian Americans finally united under the Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations](#) (We the Italians; May 4, 2021)

News about Italy

[The truth behind the €1 houses from Italy](#) (BBC Video; June 1, 2021)

[Judge: Blame in Italy cable car deaths rests with technician](#) (AP; May 30, 2021)

[Italy wins Eurovision Song Contest ...](#) (CNN: May 23, 2021)

Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,
Janice

Janice Therese Mancuso

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Director, [Italian American Press](#)

Founder, [Italian American Heritage Project](#)

Founder, [Thirty-One Days of Italians](#)

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June 2021: Volume 17, Issue 06

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