



Italian Historical Society of America

Newsletter

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BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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

Italy shares the majority of its northern border with [Switzerland](#) and Austria; totaling close to 700 miles that weave through [the Alps](#). At one time, the [land of the Roman Empire](#) extended to the North Sea, but after the fall of Rome, and over hundreds of years, boundaries were formed. The boundaries were flexible, changing when battles were won and new rulers took control; but the Alps formed a natural border with a fluctuating periphery that zigzagged through the mountains.

About forty miles north of Milan, the Italian-Swiss border cuts a deep V into the region of Lombardia, and – on its eastern side – runs parallel to Lake Como ascending fifteen miles north to some of the highest peaks in the Alps and includes the [Splügen Pass](#); an ancient path used by the Romans. Close to the border are the towns of Chiasso, Muggio, Paradiso, Lugano, Bellinzona, Lostallo, and San Bernardino – all in Ticino, a canton (state) of Switzerland.

Ticino – named after the [river that flows from the Alps](#) in Switzerland, passes through Lake Maggiore, and helps irrigate the Po Valley – is “[the Italian flair of Switzerland](#).” Once part of the [Duchy of Milan](#), Ticino retains the culture of Lombardia through its people (its official language is Italian) and [food](#), along with its quaint villages. Acquired by the Swiss Confederacy during the fifteenth century, Ticino became part of the Swiss Confederation when it was established by Napoleon in 1803.

[Bellinzona](#), the capital of Ticino, was an essential city in early Roman times because of its central location between the mountain pass and a path to the Po Valley. Through the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, the city became even more valuable with [three castles built](#) to defend the mountain passes and the surrounding region.

On the site of a late Stone Age settlement, and where an earlier Roman fort was erected, Castelgrande was reconstructed during the fourth century. As rulers in the region changed, so did ownership of the castle, along with a series of restorations. The most recent was in the late 1980s when an [entrance was cut](#) through a section of the castle's rock foundation and an elevator was installed to bring visitors from ground level into the castle.

Less than 1,000 feet southeast, Montebello Castle sits about 300 feet higher than Castelgrande. As battles for control of Bellinzona continued, the castle was built by a family from Como in the early 1300s. Under the rule of Visconti of Milan, the [family stayed in the castle](#), but within a century, it was occupied by the Visconti.

About 1,200 feet southeast of Montebello and with the highest elevation of the three fortresses, the castle of Sasso Corbaro was built by the Sforzas in the late 1400s. (The House of Sforza inherited control of the Duchy of Milan from the Visconti.) Defeated by the Swiss Confederacy in the [Battle of Giornico](#), Sasso Corbaro was built to fill in the line of defense around Bellinzona; but in 1499, France took control of Milan, and Bellinzona. After several months of French rule, the citizens of Bellinzona rebelled and united with surrounding cities to join the Swiss Confederacy.

When [viewed on a map](#), the three castles of Bellinzona form a slight curve extending

for about half a mile, but because the castles are perched on hills overlooking the village, a hiking trail connecting the castles covers slightly over five miles.

[Sunrises On The Ticino River](#)

[The Three Medieval Castles of Bellinzona](#)

[Three Castles of Bellinzona - A Journey Through Time and Space](#) (YouTube Video)

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

[The Forgotten 1970 Chicago Cubs](#) by William S. Bike

After holding first place in the National League Eastern Division from Opening Day and anticipating playing in the 1969 World Series, the Cubs eight-game losing streak caused a topple in the team's standing. Determined to "win in '70," the mid-season purchase of "bad boy" Joe Pepitone brought enthusiasm from his fellow teammates and from Cubs' fans. This tribute to the 1970 Cubs includes highlights from Pepitone's time playing as part of the team.

Italian American Heritage Project

The key element for preserving Italian American history, culture, and heritage is education. Those who have been following the Columbus debacle know it was the ideology of Howard Zinn – [a self-proclaimed anarchist](#) – being taught in schools and universities that led to the deterioration of Columbus Day. (In the mid-1980s, Zinn's book, *A People's History of the United States*, was mailed to and subsequently used by thousands of educators throughout America.) Along with a corroding Columbus Day, Italian American ethnicity is also in decline.

Today, we can see the effects of miseducation: when Columbus statues are vandalized, when major media networks publish biased opinion pieces, through the words of hate for Columbus voiced by so many, and the general lack of respect for Italian American culture. Why do publishers who have editorial policies of accuracy and fairness continued to print articles about Columbus based on fabrications? Why are Italian stereotypes still acceptable in our society?

In 2008, my paper "Searching for Italian American History," was accepted by *The Harvard College Journal of Italian American History and Culture* for its "second annual issue, to be published in February 2009." Sadly, the Journal folded before publication, but in 2015, I updated the paper and it was presented at the First Conference Series of the American Italian Sociohistorical Association held at St. John's University in Queens, New York.

With limited resources available for teaching Italian American history, my research focused on "[Crossroads: A K-16 American History Curriculum](#)," developed with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 1992. For Italian American history, the curriculum mentions Christopher Columbus, Giovanni da Verrazzano, and organized crime. For Columbus, the lesson plans provide fictional accounts from "an imagined voice" of the Taino. Combined with the book *Rethinking Columbus* (affiliated with the Zinn Education Project), schoolchildren were taught that Columbus was responsible for numerous heinous acts resulting in genocide and slave labor, among other false claims.

In my paper, I wrote: "After several years of learning about the atrocities inflicted by Columbus, schoolchildren can learn about organized crime. In the Elementary

Curriculum for fifth grade, 'Lesson 2: Alcohol and Organized Crime in the 1920s,' children can 'compare problems of alcohol and organized crime from the 1920s with those of today. ... smugglers were needed to bring alcohol into the country. This created a business for ruthless gangsters ... Al Capone controlled the supply and distribution of alcohol in Chicago like it was a business.'

What do the portrayals of Columbus as a villain and 'ruthless gangster' Al Capone teach children about Italians and Italian Americans? To children of Italian heritage, it causes embarrassment and gives them good reason to distance themselves even further from their culture. How can they have pride in their heritage when classroom activities focus on disparaging it? To children of other nationalities, these teachings show a lack of respect for Italian culture."

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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.

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.](#)

### **On the Radio**

[The Italian Radio Show](#), presented by West Coast Italian Radio is hosted by Tony La Stella and Marzia Clyons every Monday, with an hour of "everything Italian" throughout the United States. Earlier this year, the show became part of [ABC News Radio](#), broadcasting from station KMET 1490AM Palm Springs, California.

In the July 12th show, "[Columbus...A Villain or a Hero?](#)" (scroll down to select), in my role as "news correspondent," we talked about the 1600th Anniversary of Venice and the new coalition that was formed earlier this year to unify Italian Americans throughout the nation. Columbus is discussed later in the show, noting many of the points I've been writing about and have talked about in previous interviews on the show.

[2021 Directory of Italian Festivals in the U.S.](#) (Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America)

### **Italian American News**

[Andrea Doria's Foghorn to Sound Again](#) (msn.com; July 22, 2021)

[Volunteers begin cooking spaghetti for Tontitown Grape Festival](#) (KNWANews.com; July 15, 2021)

[Angelo's: American pizza with 100% Italian flour](#) (ItaianFOOD.net; June 30, 2021)

[Keeping Mario Lanza's memory alive and well](#) (South Philly Review, June 2, 2021)

### **News about Italy**

[Italy's Lamont Marcell Jacobs takes surprising gold in Olympic 100-meter race](#)

[Italy receives UNESCO site record as Bologna's porticoes are added to World Heritage list](#) (TheLocal; July 28, 2021)

[UNESCO: Italy's ban on cruise ships in Venice is 'good news'](#) (Columbia Basin Herald; July 16, 021)

Italy wins the European soccer championship (nbc.news.com' July 11, 2021)

[Asiago PDO sales soar thanks to sustainability and quality](#) (ItaianFOOD.net; July 8, 2021)

The Italian gardens hoping to change tourism (cnn.com/travel; July 7, 2021)

[Italian tourist city bans evening walks to halt overcrowding tourism](https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/italy-tourist-city-bans-evening-walks/index.html) (cnn.com/travel; July 2, 2021)

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

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