



Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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

In 2008, the marionettes of Sicily – along with their creators – were inscribed on the [UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list](#) (Originally proclaimed in 2001.) Encircling the physical structures of wood and human bodies, [Opera dei Pupi](#) is a cumulation of the techniques utilized to create the performances and the community's social and political environment, especially during the turn of the nineteenth century. This notable tradition is still an active art and an important part of Sicily's culture.

The art of puppetry has been [traced back to ancient India](#) where puppets “originated from ancient idols,” with its growth due to “the role played by Gypsies in the dissemination of this art throughout the world” Other early signs of puppetry have been found in Egypt and Greece. The puppets and their stories eventually traveled to Spain, France, and Italy; and later to other countries. The well-known English puppet show [Punch and Judy is based on “the charismatic 16th century Italian puppet Pulcinella,”](#) It was “first recorded in England in May 1662 by the diarist Samuel Pepys. He noted seeing it in Covent Garden, London, performed by the Italian puppet showman Pietro Gimonde from Bologna, otherwise known as Signor Bologna.”

It's not certain when the puppeteers began their craft in Sicily; but by all accounts, Opera dei Pupi ascended to popularity in the late 1800s. This coincides with the political and social upheaval in southern Italy – and especially in Sicily – after the unification of Italy. Dating back to earlier times, [“Marionettes were a popular form of medieval entertainment;](#) the performances varied from region to region. Mostly, the theatres produced tales relating to local legends and historical events. The most popular of these tales featured fictional heroes from the Norman conquests ...”

Although a form of entertainment, the puppet shows related tales of honor and chivalry, with a moral on the importance of justice and respect; providing an uplifting message to audiences. [“The heroic deeds of Sicilian puppet characters,](#) who fight for religion, glory, fidelity and love, are taken from the material contained in the novels and poems of the Carolingian cycle ...”

The puppeteers that performed the shows were essentially production companies overseeing all aspects of the presentation: constructing and making the costumes for the marionettes, designing and building the sets and stage, supplying the narrative and sound effects, and directing and acting as the performers. The skills were passed down through the generations.

The shows were usually a weekly event and towns throughout Sicily were either the home of a local puppeteer or entertained by a traveling troop. Of the families that became puppeteers, two distinct schools of the marionettes emerged: the Palermo style, around three-feet tall with bendable knees and the Catania style, about five-feet tall with rigid legs.

When Sicilian puppeteers immigrated to America, many continued with their professions. The shows provided an on-going form of entertainment in Italian American communities, until watching television and movies become a more popular alternative.

[The art of the puppeteers](#) is not entirely lost. Puppet Theaters in Palermo and Catania continue the tradition, presenting performances based on classic tales and more contemporary versions; and several families have established workshops to teach the craft to the next generation.

[Pupi Siciliani \(Sicilian Marionettes\)](#)

[When Tradition Becomes Art: The Figli d'Arte Cuticchio and the World of the Opera dei Pupi](#)

[Opera dei Pupi: an Italian Tradition You Can Still Find in Sicily](#)

[Antonio Pasqualino International Puppet Museum](#)

[Pupi on TV](#) (Trailers of Puppet Shows)

[Teatro dei Pupi Siciliani Famiglia Argento](#) (In Italian)

[Opera Dei Pupi Italici Art G. Botta](#) (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.

Featured Authors

[Italians Swindled to New York by Joe Tucciarone and Ben Lariccia](#)

After the unification of Italy, the southern regions experienced severe economic distress, leading to the mass migration of Italians to America beginning in the late nineteenth century. At the start of this exodus, though, was a scheme to lure Italians to America by promising paid jobs, taking their money to pay for their transportation, and then abandoning them once they arrived in New York.

In researching for their first book, *Coal War in the Mahoning Valley: The Origin of Greater Youngstown's Italians* – in university libraries throughout the United States – Joe Tucciarone and Ben Lariccia document the social and political conditions surrounding the scheme and the consequences and legacy as seen through the perspective of Italian American history.

[Read the book review on La Gazzetta Italiana](#)

[Read an interview with the authors on the Italian American Press](#)

Italian American Heritage Project

Another Tumultuous Year for Italian Americans

Is it irony that October is Italian American Heritage Month and the latest desecration of Italian Americans on film is having its premiere? Leading up to this event, the HBO series that spawned the movie had been airing on several of its channels. In addition to the cable series, podcasts and numerous products have created a brand, keeping the name of this illustrious family in the public eye. A constant reminder that Italian Americans are horrific: the men are violent, depressed, disturbed, and self-satisfying; the women are – at the same time – both selfish and self-sacrificing. Every episode displays the brutality of humanity, and it's all portrayed within the culture of Italian Americans.

The negative depictions go back almost one hundred and fifty years, with the

beginning of the mass migration of Italian immigrants who journeyed to America seeking better lives. They encountered a hostile society that not only took advantage of their naivety and difficulty in understanding English, but also scorned them; not unlike the treatment received by other immigrants in the decades that have followed.

In this current environment where hostility toward cultural groups is widely opposed, why does the culture of Italian Americans continue to be identified by those who make money glorifying a minuscule segment of the Italian American population? This tiny segment dominates in perpetuating negative stereotypes by characterizing the worst of human behaviors and giving all of them to Italian Americans.

In the world of social media, is this why it's still acceptable for Italian Americans to consistently be subjected to ridicule?

[Continue reading on the Italian American Heritage Project](#) (In the article that follows, click on the image of a New Orleans newspaper for its editorial opinion "Regarding the Italian Population.")

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The groups opposing Columbus Day have an 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 available to download (as PDFs at [Know Columbus](#)). The statements of truth and facts posted on so many Italian American websites are critical for providing accurate facts about Columbus, but they must be publicized and widely distributed to have a substantial effect. Protecting Columbus's legacy is a priority, otherwise Columbus Day 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.](#)

### **Thirty-One Days of Italians**

2021 marks the fifteenth anniversary of Thirty-One Days of Italians, a concept I developed in 2006, when researching online for Italian American Heritage Month and finding very little about it. I wondered why all the incredible people of Italian heritage were not being celebrated for their significant contributions to America, and subsequently, the world. After around eight months of research, assessing and compiling credible resources, and writing the biographies, Thirty-One Days of Italians was online, offering a list of Italians and Italian Americans who should be recognized for their extraordinary achievements; with the most noteworthy being our ancestors.

Celebrate Your Italian Heritage with "Thirty-One Days of Italians" [Read my article on La Gazzetta Italiana.](#)

See the complete October calendar of names and learn more about them at [Thirty-One Days of Italians 2021-22 List.](#)

### **Italian American Heritage Month and Christopher Columbus**

Without Columbus, Italian American Heritage Month may not have happened. Read the articles below to learn how and why Columbus is an integral part of Italian American culture, heritage, and history.

[Christopher Columbus: When Did the Hero Become a Villain?](#)

[The True Legacy of Christopher Columbus](#)

[Letter sent to U.S. Congress to keep Columbus Day as a Federal Holiday](#) (PDF)

[Lesson Plans: The Columbus Letter](#)

### **Italian American News**

[The Vinland Map, Thought to be the Oldest Map of America, is Officially a Fake](#) (npr.org; September 30, 2021) [*Thanks to Peter, who sent this [link to Rare Book Monthly](#).*]

[Uniting The Disunited States](#) (Italic Institute of America; September 25, 2021)

[Italian American Museum's 25 years due to one man's dedication](#) (timesunion.com; September 19, 2021)

[Sacco, Vanzetti Tragedy Explored at Loyola Staging](#) (Fra Noi; September 18, 2021)

[JCCIA's Italian Unity Day Rally a Huge Success](#) (Fra Noi; September 18, 2021)

['Visions of Dante' Exhibition Opens](#) (news.cornell.edu; September 14, 2021)

[Rocky Marciano was Formidable from His First Fight to His Last](#) (troymedia.com; September 7, 2021)

[A Century Old Movie Brings Enrico Caruso Back](#) (L'Italo Americano; August 29, 2021)

### **News About Italy**

[The New Italian Flag Carrier Expands its Fleet with 31 New Airbus Jets](#) (airlinerwatch.com; October 1, 2021)

[Italy Wins World Pastry Championship](#) (ansa.it; September 27, 2021)

[Italian Cheese Exports Grow](#) (italianfood.net; September 23, 2021)

[Massive Violin Transports Musicians Down Venice's Grand Canal](#) (npr.com; September 20, 2021)

[Bugatti Celebrates 100th Anniversary Of Historic Victory With Classic Car Event In Italy](#) (carscoops.com; September 18, 2021)

[Italy is Protecting its Giant Trees](#) (goodnewsnetwork.com; September 17, 2021)

[2021 is a Good Year for Tomatoes in Italy](#) (italianfood.net; September 8, 2021)

[Italy is the Ultimate Golf Destination](#) (si.com; August 24, 2021)

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

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