



Italian Historical Society of America

Newsletter

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

The Italian Association of Friends of the Nativity was established in the early 1950s. Part of [Napoli Artigianato Artistico](#), an association with a mission to provide business support to local artisans that transform raw products into art, Friends of the Nativity is the only organization within Artistico to focus on the crafting of the art instead of the materials used in creating the art – ranging from fabric to metal, paper to porcelain, and jewels to stones.

[Saint Francis of Assisi arranged the first presepio](#) (nativity/ manger/ crèche/ crib) in the early 1200s in preparation for his Christmas mass in Greccio (about 55 miles south of Assisi). While most refer to the passage in the bible as the inspiration for the live nativity, some mention that Saint Francis saw a manger during his travels in Bethlehem and replicated the scene. All note that in using the nativity, it was his intention to bring a closer connection between the birth of Christ and celebrating Christmas.

Other churches began to include nativities during mass, and nativities started to appear in private homes. The [Royal Family of the House of Bourbon](#) displayed elaborate nativity scenes, and was influential in the development of the nativity as a Christmas tradition. In a 2010 exhibit of a nativity from the House of Caserta (Bourbon castle in Naples), the [Moscow Kremlin Museum notes](#); “The exhibition explores the tradition of Presepio making in Italy, the country where the earliest nativity scenes have been introduced to the vast cycle of Christmas customs by Saint Francis of Assisi. By the end of the XVIIIth century, thanks to the patronage of King Charles the III, the art of the Presepio was in its golden age. With time the Presepio, having been intended for sacral religious ceremonies in churches, became popular among the nobility and later on turned into a folk custom for people all over the world.”

As the size of the nativity scene expanded, the sizes of the figurines became smaller to accommodate more pieces; and the nativity became part of a surrounding village. More detailed pieces were added – fruits and vegetables for the produce vendor and tools for the workshop – and figurines of contemporary personalities became popular. Rome and Naples are leading cities with “[Christmas markets \[that\] showcase Italian presepe, or nativity scenes](#).”

In Rome, [Piazza Navona](#) is transformed into a Christmas marketplace – one of the largest in Italy – ending with a celebration of [La Befana](#), and closing on January 6th, Epiphany, the day the Magi visited the holy infant.

[San Gregorio Armeno](#) is a narrow street in the [Historic Centre of Naples, a UNESCO site](#), filled with shops specializing in handmade nativities, sold as complete scenes or in separate pieces to add to or create your own. Open all year, a “[large part of the artisan workshops are always open with handicraft products on display](#).”

[St. Francis' Reenactment of Christmas was the First Nativity Scene](#)

[San Gregorio Armeno: The Art of Nativity](#)

[The Art of Presepio: Not Just a Nativity Scene](#) (Scroll down for detailed photos.)

[La lavorazione artistico/artigianale del Presepio](#) (In Italian)

[Christmas Alley in Naples: Holiday Cheer All Year](#)
[Giuseppe Ercolano: Magic of the Neapolitan Presepe](#)

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

[Frank's Christmas Book by Frank P. Riga](#)

For children and adults, a collection of Christmas stories intertwined with the history of the customs that developed the stories into legends. Includes photographs and additional resources.

Note: The IAP will be undergoing technical updates through January 2022. Currently, some links are not operational.

Italian American Heritage Project

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/indigenouseoplesday>

"By resolution 49/214 of 23 December 1994, the United Nations General Assembly decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples shall be observed on 9 August every year. The date marks the day of the first meeting, in 1982, of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. In 1990, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Each year, UNESCO marks the celebration of the Day by sharing information on projects and activities that are relevant to the annual theme.

Indigenous peoples live in all regions of the world and own, occupy or use some 22% of global land area. Numbering at least 370-500 million, indigenous peoples represent the greater part of the world's cultural diversity, and have created and speak the major share of the world's almost 7000 languages. Many indigenous peoples continue to be confronted with marginalization, extreme poverty and other human rights violations. Through partnerships with indigenous peoples, UNESCO seeks to support them in addressing the multiple challenges they face, while acknowledging their significant role in sustaining the diversity of the world's cultural and biological landscape."

On October 8th, in acknowledging the federal holiday of Columbus Day, President Biden issued two proclamations. In his [Proclamation on Columbus Day, 2021](#), he stated "Columbus [was] the first of many Italian explorers to arrive in what would later become known as the Americas. ... Many Italians would follow his path in the centuries to come, risking poverty, starvation, and death in pursuit of a better life. Today, millions of Italian Americans continue to enrich our country's traditions and culture and make lasting contributions to our Nation ..." His Columbus Day Proclamation includes a lengthy paragraph starting with, "Today, we also acknowledge the painful history of wrongs and atrocities that many European explorers inflicted on Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities."

In his [Proclamation on Indigenous Peoples' Day, 2021](#) (almost twice as long than his words about Columbus), he notes, "Today, we acknowledge the significant sacrifices made by Native peoples to this country – and recognize their many ongoing contributions to our Nation."

[Italian American Leaders Stunned and Offended by President Joe Biden's Indigenous Peoples' Day Proclamation](#)

It appears that no one in the White House, or others with interest in Columbus Day, are aware of or find this relevant:

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

[Going to Bat Big Time for Columbus](#) (Fra Noi, November 2, 2021)

[Fostering the Connection Among Italian-Americans is Important, All Year Round](#)
(L'Italo Americano; November 2, 2021)

[The Friendship Train](#) (La Gazzetta Italiana; November 1, 2021)

[Anti-Italian American Advertisements Must Stop](https://ctmirror.org/2021/10/29/anti-italian-american-advertisements-must-stop/) (ctmirror.org; October 29, 2021)

[Mazzanti Evantra Pura Is an Italian Supercar With a Corvette American Heart](https://www.autoevolution.com/news/mazzanti-evantra-pura-is-an-italian-supercar-with-a-corvette-american-heart/100121.html)
([autoevolution.com](https://www.autoevolution.com/news/mazzanti-evantra-pura-is-an-italian-supercar-with-a-corvette-american-heart/100121.html); October 26, 2021)

[LA Police Investigating Graffiti on Italian Catholic Church as Hate Crime](#) (The Hill; October 12, 2021)

News about Italy

[Italian Mafia: 'Ndrangheta Members Convicted as Italy Begins Huge Trial](#) (BBC; November 7, 2021)

[The Fight Between Italy and Croatia Over the Name Prosecco Gets Ready to Pop](#)
(NPR; November 3, 2021)

[How Italy's High-Speed Trains Helped Kill Alitalia](#) (cnn.com; October 4, 2021)

[Italy to Step Up Fight Against Italian Sounding Food Fakes](#) (ANSI.it; September 2, 2021)

Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,
Janice

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Notice About Links: On the date of publication, the links in this newsletter were current. In older newsletters, some links may be inactive if the URL has changed or is no longer available.

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