



# Italian Historical Society of America

## Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2022

BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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

On the road where pilgrims in medieval times journeyed from Canterbury to Rome, and often beyond to Jerusalem, the ancient city of [San Gimignano](#) grew and prospered. Located slightly west of and midway between Florence and Siena, San Gimignano was first settled during the [Etruscan Period](#), sometime in the late fourth century BC.

Similar to the well-known legend of Romulus and Remus – the brothers who founded Rome – Muzio and Silvio are the legendary founding brothers of San Gimignano; but the similarities end there. Muzio and Silvio fled Rome in 63 BC because of their involvement with the Roman Senator Lucius Sergius Catilina (Catiline) in the [Catilinarian Conspiracy](#). Catiline “with the help of a group of aristocrats and disaffected veterans” plotted “to overthrow the Roman Republic.” In San Gimignano, about 75 miles northwest of Rome, the brothers built two castles.

For pilgrims following the holy route of the [Via Francigena](#) through Tuscany, most started in Canterbury, crossing the English Channel to France, then to Switzerland, and then crossing the Alps to Italy. When the Bishop of Canterbury traveled to Rome in 990 to receive his [pallium](#), he made notes of the churches he visited, and where he stayed and ate, providing documentation of his journey and the foundation for reconstructing the holy route. (The route is said to have been in use in the mid-300s AD, and the [Road to Rome](#) is still traveled today.) In 2010, Via Francigena was [placed on the UNESCO National Tentative List](#). Through a feasibility study, it was decided that each country would apply for inscription for the section of the road within its borders; [approval for Via Francigena in Italy](#) is pending.

With the bishop’s written guidance, pilgrimages increased. San Gimignano flourished through trade markets and agriculture – most notably saffron and white wine – and become a free municipality by the end of the twelfth century. As merchant families prospered, they showed off their riches by building towers above their homes and businesses: the taller the tower, the wealthier the family. By the end of the thirteenth century, within the 53 square miles of San Gimignano, around 72 towers filled the landscape and dominated the skyline.

The (Black Death) plague of 1348 devastated Europe and reduced San Gimignano’s population by almost two-thirds, causing the city to fall under the rule of Florence. While most of the towers were dismantled, some remained. Today, San Gimignano is referred to as a Medieval Manhattan, with around 12 towers forming its signature modern-day skyline.

In 1922, graphic artist M.C. Escher visited Italy for the second time. That year and the year after, he produced two [woodcuts of San Gimignano](#). He returned to Italy in 1924, married and settled in Rome, staying until 1935. “[Each spring, Escher made a long journey through a different part of Italy](#), such as Calabria, Sicily, the Abruzzi and the coast around Naples. Escher loved these long walks and would continue to love them for the rest of his life.”

Escher was greatly influenced by the architecture and beauty of Italy. View his artwork

from the [Italian period, 1923–1935](#). (Larger collection [here](#).) His work is quite popular in Italy; and has been [exhibited four times](#) in the past three years.

[San Gimignano 1300 \(Museum with 3D replica of city in 1300\)](#)

[Commune di San Gimignano](#) (In Italian)

[“Via Francigena: Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certified in 1994](#)

[Via Francigena in Tuscany](#)

[Art Cities: San Gimignano](#)

[San Gimignano - The Medieval Manhattan!](#)

[Panoramic View of San Gimignano](#)

[San Gimignano: The Manhattan of the Middle Ages, From Art to Good Wines](#)

[San Gimignano ~ Sights and Views of the Mediaeval Town ~ UNESCO World Heritage](#)

### **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.

When you think of Italian American movies, what titles spring to mind? Where are the movies that are a more accurate representation of Italian American history, culture, and heritage? Almost any book listed on the Italian American Press would make a wonderful movie. The [Make It A Movie](#) campaign, started in early 2020, highlights nine books that would make exceptional movies. All genres are covered from historical epics to fantasy, and occasionally one will be featured in *Tutto Italiano*. Two recent articles in *La Gazzetta Italiana* provide brief overviews and suggestions for actors to play in the leading roles.

[Make it a Movie](#)

[Make it a Movie \(Part II\)](#)

### **Featured Book for Make It A Movie**

[Royanna An Extra Terrestrial Affair](#) by Raphael Ferraro

Mystery, adventure, and a touch of romance in this science fiction tale about an encounter between a human and an alien. From the Gateway of the Sun – an ancient archaeological site in Bolivia – to upstate New York near Lake Ontario – where Mormon prophet Joseph Smith saw the angel Maroni – this science fiction adventure blends the past, present, and future through ancient religions and future prophecy. Leading roles: Jon Bon Jovi, Lady Gaga (A perfect part for her!)

### **Italian American Heritage Project**

Keep your Italian heritage alive. An excellent source for learning about Italian American culture and heritage is a museum specifically established to focus on the Italian American experience. Many have virtual exhibits and tours available on their websites. [List of Italian American Museums](#).

Recently, a message was received about [Thirty-One Days of Italians](#) “to thank you for putting together your [Italian Immigration page](#)! My [daughter's] Girl Scout troop is currently working on their Heritage Fun Patch and your resources helped us a bunch! (My family is originally from Naples!) ... troop leader encouraged the parents to work

with our girls at home to share our family's history! She asked the girls to research their family's heritage and put together a presentation to share with the troop. Your page led us to some great information on Italian Immigration, so [my daughter] and I wanted to make sure we thanked you."

Through their research, they found another source and asked it be included on The Italian Immigrant page. Commercial websites are rarely listed as a resource, and although not listed on *Thirty-One Days of Italians*, it is a guide to many useful links, [Italian Heritage: The Food, Wine, and Language](#).

The Girl Scouts website includes the page [LIFE SKILLS, Celebrate Cultural Richness, Explore multicultural diversity](#), stating: "We're stronger together. By acknowledging the diversity, heritage, and contributions of our multicultural communities, Girl Scouts can find new ways to make the world a better place for everyone."

If you believe Italian American Heritage Month should be included on that page, please contact the Girl Scouts and let them know. If you have a child or grandchild in the Girl Scouts, encourage them to become involved in suggesting that Italian American Heritage Month be added to raise awareness of the rich history and culture belonging to Italian Americans.

Talk with your children (no matter what age), grandchildren, other family members, friends, and educators. Tell them about the significant contributions people of Italian heritage have made to America ... and the world. [List of more than 70 contributors on \*Thirty-One Days of Italians\*](#).

Learn about Columbus. It's difficult to correct over 30 years of misinformation, and the rapid spread through digital sources is disheartening. In 2018, the Italian American Heritage Project was established to provide educational resources about Italian American history, heritage, and culture. The website also addresses the Columbus Controversy by providing facts about Columbus, how the controversy started, and why it continues. Read [What is the Truth About Columbus?](#) To understand how Columbus became an important part of American history, read [Christopher Columbus: When Did the Hero Become a Villain?](#) (Some links are no longer active.)

[Lesson plans developed from the letters Columbus wrote after his first voyage.](#)

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America. The statements of truth and facts posted on Italian American websites are not working. Columbus Day has lost much of its relevance in American history. 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**

[NYPD Honors Whistleblower Frank Serpico — 50 Years Late](#) (Times Union; February 4, 2022)

[Hallmark Movie Shooting at DeFazio's This Week](#) (Times Union; January 31, 2022)

[LaGuardia Airport Celebrates Completion of-Groundbreaking New Facilities](#) (Brooklyn Daily Eagle; January 27, 2022)

[Learn more about Fiorello LaGuardia](#) on *Thirty-One Days of Italians*. (Scroll down.)

[If You Build It, They Will Come](#) (italic.org; January 22, 2022  
[Learn more about Sabato Rodia and Lou Del Bianco](#) on *Thirty-One Days of Italians*.  
(Scroll down.)

[Lizzadro Museum Showcases Masterfully Hand-Cut Gems](#) (Fra Noi; December 9, 2021)  
*[Read about Joseph Lizzadro, founder of the Museum.](#)*

## News about Italy

[Offspring of Italy's Last King Sue State in Battle to Reclaim Crown Jewels](#) (The Guardian; February 9, 2022)

[Italy Makes Constitution Greener, Environmentalists Call for Action](#) (U.S. News; February 8, 2022).

[Italy Clinches its 1st-Ever Olympic Curling Medal](#) (abc news; February 2, 2022)

[Italian Police Object to Being Sent Pink Face Masks to Wear on Duty](#) (The Guardian; January 14, 2022)

*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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