



Italian Historical Society of America

Newsletter

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BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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

When thinking about Italian American baseball players, [Joe DiMaggio](#) is most likely at the top of a list that includes [Yogi Berra](#), [Roy Campanella](#), [Tommy Lasorda](#), and [Phil Rizzuto](#), among many others. DiMaggio, born in 1914 to Italian immigrants, lived in [North Beach](#) – at the time an Italian immigrant neighborhood in San Francisco – and played baseball in the Boys Club League. His professional baseball career began in 1932 when he played in the minor leagues. He quickly attracted the attention of baseball fans and the major leagues, and joined the New York Yankees in 1934.

Discrimination towards Italians was prevalent at the time, and it's noted that DiMaggio's rise in baseball "[created a very positive image for Italian Americans](#)," and it wasn't just his incredible skill for playing the game. "[There was just something special about Joe – the person – not just the player. Joe put his mark on American culture, which survives to this day.](#)"

While DiMaggio may have caused America's perception of Italian Americans to change, other Italian Americans also left their indelible marks on American baseball. From 1926 to 1937, [Tony Lazzeri](#) was part of the New York Yankees, playing alongside Lou Gehrig, Bob Meusel, and Babe Ruth to form "[Murderers' Row](#)." Lazzeri had a huge Italian American fan base; and though "[subject to vilification](#)" because he was of Italian heritage, he is credited for bringing more respectability toward accepting Italian immigrants in America.

Between 1911 and 1921, [Francesco Stephano Pezzolo](#) played with the Chicago White Sox and later, with the New York Yankees. Better known as Ping Bodie, Pezzolo [changed his name](#) (note the misspelling) to avoid discrimination. Bodie roomed with Babe Ruth, and is said to have given Ruth his [Italian nickname "bambino."](#)

Almost 30 years before Lazzeri joined the Yankees, and more than 20 years before Pezzolo "became the first of the San Francisco Italians to join the Yankees," [Ed Abbaticchio](#) signed with the Philadelphia Phillies, starting his professional career in baseball primarily as a second baseman. His sports career began earlier, though, in 1895 when he played professional football. Abbaticchio is often noted as "[the 1st significant Italian American player](#)," and considered "the first professional two-sport athlete."

These baseball icons of Italian heritage not only persevered to pursue their dreams, but also gave Italian immigrants – and generations later, Italian Americans – the inspiration to pursue their dreams.

[Ed Abbaticchio American Football Database](#)

[Remembering Ping Bodie](#)

[May 24, 1936: Tony Lazzeri's Two Grand Slams and 11 RBIs](#)

[Hall of Fame Baseballer Tony Lazzeri](#) (YouTube Video)

[Joe DiMaggio Through the Years](#)

[Joe DiMaggio Statue Taken Out Of Little Italy](#) (2019)

[Rizzuto Struck Platinum on Meat Loaf's '78 Hit](#) (2022)

[Italian Americans in Baseball Exhibition](#) (2012)

[The Greatest Ever Italian-American Major League Baseball Players](#)

[National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame](#)

[Italian American Baseball Foundation](#)

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 on the Italian American Press

Three books by Lawrence Baldassaro

[*Tony Lazzeri: Yankees Legend and Baseball Pioneer*](#)

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

[*Beyond DiMaggio: Italian Americans in Baseball*](#)

The history of how Italian immigrants became Italian Americans combined with the popularity of America's favorite pastime told through "players, coaches, managers, and executives" of Italian heritage

[*Baseball Italian Style*](#)

A collection of personal accounts told by Italian American major league baseball players, coaches, umpires and others from 1930 to today

[Larry Baldassaro Wins 2022 SABR Research Award for Tony Lazzeri Book](#)

[Interviews with Baseball's Greatest Italian Players](#)

[Lawrence Baldassaro on Lazzeri](#) (MLB Video)

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](#).

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

[Play Baseball in Italy This Summer](#)

Caliendo Sports International Baseball is organizing a youth baseball development trip to Italy sponsored by the Italian American Baseball Foundation.

[Those Other Explorers](#) (Italic Institute of America; April 10, 2022)

[Bobby Rydell, a '60s Teen Idol and 'Bye Bye Birdie' Star, Dies](#) (NPR; April 5, 2022)

[OSCAR, OSCAR, OSCAR](#) (Italic Institute of America; April 2, 2022)

[Fifty Years Later, We Should Revile 'The Godfather'](#) (Italic Institute of America, March 21, 2022)

News about Italy

[Federazione Italiana Baseball/Softball – Team Italy](#)

[Venice to Launch Booking System for Tourists This Summer](#) (wantedinrome.com; April 20, 2022)

[Venice Biennale Returns After Three Years Off](#) (msn.com; April 10, 2022)

[At the Venice Biennale, the Show Goes on For Ukrainian Artists](#) (barrons.co; March 22, 2022)

[Pompeii Hires Robot Dog to Patrol Its Ancient Ruins](#) (Italymagazine.com; April 13, 2022)

[Italian Wine Exports Achieved an All-Time High in 2021](#) (italianfood.net; April 12, 2022)

Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,
Janice

Janice Therese Mancuso

Publisher, [Tutto Italiano](#)

Director, [Italian American Press](#)

Founder, [Italian American Heritage Project](#)

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

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