



# Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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

The history of the [Uffizi Gallery](#) began in the early thirteenth century, when members of the [Medici family](#) settled in Florence. Originally from the [Mugello](#) – a valley in the foothills of the Apennines, about 20 miles north of Florence – where two villas built by the family are part of [The Medici Villas and Gardens, UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#) – the family intermittently ruled in Florence for over three centuries.

[Inscribed in 2013 for Outstanding Universal Value](#), “twelve villas and two gardens ... form the first example of the connection between architecture, gardens, and the environment and became an enduring reference for princely residences throughout Italy and Europe. Their gardens and integration into the natural environment helped develop the appreciation of landscape characteristic Humanism and the Renaissance.”

Built before the twelfth century as a fortification to protect a popular ancient passage, [Castello del Trebbio](#) provided sweeping views of the valley and adjoining hilltops; and secured a position of power for the Pazzi family, rivals of the Medici family.

In the early history of the Florence Republic – formed in 1115 – guild members elected a leader, who held the position for several months. In the fourteenth century, [Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici](#), a guild member, founded the bank that would build the family's fortune; and by the early 1400s, both the Pazzi and Medici families, along with several others were vying for more powerful positions. In the mid-1400s, in an attempt to gain more control, [Francesco de' Pazzi conspired in a plot to kill Lorenzo de Medici](#) and his brother Giuliano, great grandsons of Giovanni di Bicci and trained to be rulers of the Florence Republic.

Giuliano was murdered, but Lorenzo escaped and the Florentines turned against the Pazzi family, banishing them from Florence and seizing their land. The Medici family acquired Castello del Trebbio. About ten miles northwest, [Cafaggiolo Villa](#) was built in the early 1450s and became “a country house for holidaying, relaxation, and to take care of farming activities ...”

The Renaissance has its roots in the Middle Ages in Florence – starting with the works of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337), who brought realism to painting. At the same time, commerce was flourishing and merchants were building palaces and villas, and investing in trading expeditions. With their newfound fortune they became more influential, and the Medici family was in the center of financial activity, establishing banks in northern Italy, several in France, and one in England, making it easier for money to circulate throughout parts of Europe.

Their acquired wealth brought more prestige and the opportunity to commission and sponsor the most acclaimed masters of painting, sculpture, architecture, politics, and science: Brunelleschi (1377-1446), [Ghiberti](#) (1378-1455), Donatello (1386-1466), [Fra Angelico](#) (1395-1455), [Verrocchio](#) (1435-1488), Bramante (1444-1514), da Vinci (1450-1519), Machiavelli (1469-1527), Michelangelo (1475-1564), Raphael (1483-1520), Galileo (1564-1642), Caravaggio (1571-1610), and Bernini (1598-1680),

among many others. Before his voyages, Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) worked as a banker for the Medici family.

Cosimo I (great-grandson of Lorenzo) was the first Grand Duke of Tuscany. Needing a larger central location, he "[commissioned ... construction starting in 1560, the Magistrature building, or 'Uffizi'](#), ... the administrative and judicial offices of Florence." [Giorgio Vasari](#), an accomplished architect and painter designed the offices (uffizi) and at the request of Cosimo I, a covered walkway from the uffizi crossing the Arno River and ending at the [Pitti Palace](#) (home of the Grand Duke) was constructed. The [Vasari Corridor](#), completed in 1565, provided a path of privacy and security for the Medici family. It has been closed for renovations but is scheduled to open soon.

The uffizi of the Medici dynasty became the Uffizi Gallery in the late 1760s – an accumulation of 300 years of paintings, sculptures, statues, busts, prints, drawings, books, and other objects of art surrounded by the magnificent architecture of the Italian Renaissance.

*Includes Excerpts from "Con Amore" (2006) and "Tutto Italiano" (2017-2020).*

[23 Artworks Not to Miss at the Uffizi Gallery](#)

[What are the Must-See Artworks in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence?](#)

[Uffizi Gallery in Florence: History, Works and Curiosities](#)

[The Uffizi Collection: Art in Florence:| Jones Gallery Lecture Series](#) (YouTube)

[Discover the Medici Villas in the Mugello Area](#)

[Castello del Trebbio : Our History, Our Roots](#)

[The "Pazzi Conspiracy"](#)

[The Pazzi Conspiracy, The Event that Forever Changed the Face of Florence and Italy](#)

### **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. (Note: A technical glitch has delayed the May/June website update.)

### **Featured Author**

*Italian Culture in America: The Immigrants 1880 to 1930 From Discrimination to Assimilation* by [Ralph G. Giordano](#)

In his second volume on Italian culture in America, Ralph examines what is often called the "Great Wave," "Great Arrival," or "Great Migration" of Italians to America. With a majority from the southern regions – where the impact of a united Italy caused further economic hardships – Italian immigrants sought a new life in a foreign land. Some stayed long enough to help build America, returning to Italy with their new-found wealth; others stayed seeking better opportunities for themselves and future generations.

The history of the Italian immigrant's transition to Italian American is as varied as the multitude of villages within each of the twenty regions of Italy. From New York to California and from Illinois to Louisiana, Ralph provides a nationwide look into how Italians integrated their culture and lives into American society.

Read more about Ralph's book in the June issue of [La Gazzetta Italiana](#).

Read my review of Ralph's first volume, [\*Italian Culture in America: How a Founding Father introduced Italian Art, Architecture, Food, Wine, and Liberty to the American People\*](#) posted on *La Gazzetta Italiana*.

## **Italian American Heritage Project** ***Italian American History***

This past April – on the 17th – numerous Italian and Italian American organizations held events to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Giovanni da Verrazzano's discovery (for Europe) of what is now New York Harbor. The Italian (born) explorer sailed for France, and it's been documented that both Verrazzano and Leonardo da Vinci "[were acquainted with the same members of very powerful French families. They both worked for the same royal patron, King Francis I of France ...](#)"

Along with Italian American organizations, the Consulate [General of France in New York attended](#) the ceremony in [Battery Park](#) (now The Battery), New York City, where a statue of Verrazzano was placed in 1909. In Washington, D.C., "the [House of Representatives](#)— (1) acknowledges April 17, 2024, as the 500th anniversary of the discovery of New York Bay by Giovanni da Verrazzano; and (2) recognizes the contributions of Giovanni da Verrazzano's voyage to North America, highlighting Verrazzano's pivotal role in the mapping and exploration of the continent and Verrazzano's lasting impact on the foundation of New York City and the United States."

In New York, the [Verrazzano School](#) is an Honors Program in the College of Staten Island (CSI, City University of New York – CUNY) "designed to offer students a unique undergraduate education through academically motivated learning communities." From the website: "Verrazzano Honors will help you start your life now. Conduct research, travel, be a leader, explore, grow, and learn. ... We go beyond the classroom to make sure you are preparing for your career, exploring your city, and giving back to your community."

One of the [requirements of the program](#) is "40 hours of community service, which not only benefits the local community, it helps you explore your interests, develop your resume, build networks, and gain new perspectives. ... Failure to fulfill the community service requirement will result in dismissal from The Verrazzano School."

In addition to emphasizing exploring and learning in correlation with Verrazzano's attributes, the college's athletic division is named after Verrazzano's ship, *La Dauphine*. Author Ralph G. Giordano taught at CSI for 25 years and provided this: "the nickname 'CSI Dolphins' was purposely picked by College President Dr. Edmund Volpe (1922-2007) based upon Verrazzano's ship 'La Dauphine' translated to English." (Ralph's latest book about Italian American culture is mentioned above.)

In 1952, John N. LaCorte, founder of the Italian Historical Society of America, "sponsored the rededication of the Verrazzano monument in Battery Park, New York City. The monument had previously been removed during the construction of the Battery Tunnel;" and two years later, "the Society was successful in having April 17 proclaimed Verrazzano Day by [New York City] Mayor Robert Wagner."

When LaCorte learned that a bridge was to be constructed connecting Brooklyn and Staten Island, he recommended it should be "[named in honor of Verrazzano.](#)" LaCorte faced numerous obstacles, overcoming each and in 1964 the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge opened. In 2018, the name of the bridge was changed to include a second "z" in the spelling of the explorer's name, but it's been [documented that both spellings are acceptable.](#)

From the IHSA: "The Verrazzano Bridge symbolizes the spirit of committing to an idea and following through to the end. Without the singular efforts of John N. LaCorte, the naming of the bridge after the navigator who piloted the first European ship to pass through the waters which it traverses would not have occurred."

LaCorte's mission was accomplished long before the name change. A [video recently posted provides a preview of an interview with LaCorte](#) providing an overview of how he pursued his goal. His Italian accent may – at some times – be difficult to understand, but the passion in his voice and his dedication to achieving his goal are clearly present. (Watch the video a second time with the transcript. AI has made a mess of it, but LaCorte's message of perseverance and pride prevails. His message is especially prevalent when he compares the difficulty of pronouncing Verrazzano with [Kosciuszko](#), another bridge in New York City.)

The video is available for purchase from [Tony De Nonno Productions](#). (Click on Film Series and scroll down.)

As with other great Italian explorers, Giovanni da Verrazzano left a legacy of contributing to Italian American history. The links in this article provide the foundation for lesson plans.

[NYC Parks and the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge](#) (Great Pictures)

[Verrazzano Visits the Narragansett Indians in 1524](#) (Rhode Island)

[Italian Air Force Frece Tricolori in NY Air Show](#)

"Their performance will commemorate the 500th anniversary of Giovanni da Verrazzano's expedition to America in 1524." (At Orange County Airport, NY, in August.)

[Giovanni da Verrazzano and the Naming of the Bridge](#)

Read my article about Verrazzano in the April issue of *La Gazzetta Italiana*.

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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.](#)

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.](#)

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.](#)

## Exhibits

[POMPEII: The Exhibition](#)

Cincinnati Museum Center, Ohio; Now through July 28, 2024

"Through 150 artifacts, *POMPEII: The Exhibition* tells the tale of a city hidden from view and forgotten for centuries.

## Italian American News

[Cabrini: Behind the Scenes](#) (italc.org; May 12, 2024)

[NYC Seamstress, 95, Reunited with Long-Lost Garment District Statue of Herself from Decades Ago](#) (nypost.com; May 5, 2024)

[Frank Stella Obituary](#) (theguardian.com; May 5, 2024)

One of the most influential US abstract artists who started out as a minimalist but constantly reinvented his work

[Columbus as Art](#) (italic.org; April 28, 2024)

[Where Did All the Italians Go?](#) (italianamericanherald.com; April 18, 2024)

[Tony Bennett: A Life Well-Lived](#) (juliensauctions.com; April 18, 2024)

[Diversity without End](#) (italic.org; April 7, 2024)

[Capone's Unsavory Precursors](#) (italic.org; April 1, 2024)

[Columbus Drive Could Become Barack Obama Drive Under Proposed Ordinance](#) (chicago.suntimes.com; March 20, 2024)

[Cabrini Film a Miracle in the Making](#) (franoi.com; February 18, 2024)

## Italy in the News

[Seismic Storm Hits Italy's Campi Flegrei Super Volcano with Strongest Earthquake in 40 Years](#) (msn.com; May 21, 2024)

[Stellantis Removes Italy Flag from Polish-Made Fiat 600 in Dispute with Rome](#) (reuters.com; May 21, 2024)

[Alicudi Gets the Goat](#) (euroweeklynews.com; May 11, 2024)

[Pope Makes Landmark Visit to Venice Biennale and Proclaims that 'The World Needs Artists'](#) (cnn.com; April 28, 2024)

[Vinitaly: Italian Wine Exports Triple in Last 20 Years](#) (italianfood.net; April 18, 2024)

[Johnny Depp Eyes \\$4M Historic Estate in Italy —As Worried Officials Vow To 'Protect The Castle' At All Costs](#) (nypost.com; April 15, 2024)

[Florence's Famed Ponte Vecchio to be Restored to Former Glory with Two-Year Makeover](#) (cnn.com; April 12, 2024)

[Stunning Frescoes of Mythological Characters Uncovered in Pompeii](#) (cnn.com; April 11, 2024)

[Commercial Featuring Nuns Taking Potato Chips for Communion Sparks Outrage in Italy](#) (cnn.com; April 10, 2024)

[Europe's Highest Pedestrian Suspension Bridge Opens in Italy](#) (cnn.com; April 1, 2024)

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

Janice Therese Mancuso

