



# Italian Historical Society of America

## Newsletter

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

It was during the [Republic Period of the Roman Empire](#) – from 509 to 27 BC – that the city of Ephesus, on the Aegean Sea, became part of the vast network of land acquired by a growing government seated in Rome. The last Etruscan king of the Roman monarchy, [Lucius Tarquinius Superbus](#), was exiled after numerous charges of misconduct were brought against him and he was defeated in battle. During the Republic Period, the new form of government eventually divided power between the patricians and the [commoners](#), but after several victories at war – and gathering allies in the senate – Julius Caesar became dictator in 49 BC. Five years later, he was assassinated and Rome was ruled by three men – known as the [Second Triumvirate](#) – until Octavian, Caesar's adopted heir, became the first Roman emperor in 27 BC.

Ephesus, an ancient Greek colony established in [Asia Minor](#) during the eleventh century BC, was ruled by [Alexander the Great](#) from 336 BC until his death in 323 BC. [His empire](#) stretched from Greece east to India and south to include Egypt along the Nile River. With no heirs, rule of Alexander's [empire was split](#) among several of his generals. The northern coast along the Black Sea and the land that juts into the Aegean Sea would become the Kingdom of Lysimachus. After Lysimachus's death in 281 BC, it became the [Kingdom of Pergamon](#), ruled by Attalus I, the first ruler of the Attalid dynasty. In 138 BC, a distant relative, Attalus III became the last king of Pergamon. He ruled for five years and, leaving no heirs, willed the kingdom to the Roman Republic. It's noted that he may have felt his kingdom would eventually be taken over by the Roman Republic and bequeathing the territory would cause less disruption for the citizens.

When Octavian became emperor (in 27 BC), he was granted the name [Augustus](#) by the Roman senate. Under his rule, the empire flourished, [acquiring more territories](#) and entering a period of relative peace, [Pax Romana](#). With its seaside location, [Ephesus](#) became one of the largest cities of the Roman Empire and the capital city of the Asian territory. A vibrant trade center, Ephesus benefitted from its Roman rule. As businesses expanded and the population grew, Rome heavily invested in the city, building numerous structures of marble, including a main thoroughfare, gates, temples, and terraced houses, many embossed with mosaics. An amphitheater was enlarged to seat 25,000, a huge bath complex was built, fountains were installed, and statues lined the streets and entrances to buildings.

Tiberius Julius Celsus Polemaeanus, known as Celsus, was born in Asia Minor around AD 45. He was a prominent citizen who became a military officer and a Roman senator. It's noted that Celsus was planning the construction of a library in Ephesus shortly before he died c. 115. Using the funds established for the project, his son oversaw the building of a monument to his father: a library and a crypt where his father was entombed

The [Library of Celsus](#) was one of the three largest ancient libraries, built to hold at least 12,000 scrolls, stored on shelves in niches built into the walls. Large windows provided long hours of natural light and double walls are said to have been a shield against humidity. The building was damaged in 262, from an earthquake or a Goth

invasion; and sometime during the tenth or eleventh century, the facade tumbled in an earthquake.

In the early 1900s, excavation teams found the sarcophagus of Celsus, and during the 1970s, the facade was reassembled, using fragments from the original building. In 2015, Ephesus was inscribed on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#).

IAP author Peter Tafari (see below) visited Ephesus during a cruise last year, and recently wrote an article about Roman libraries: “[an] important feature often omitted from the history books were the libraries which served not only the surprisingly high number of the literate, but also the rest of the people through public readings. ... In his great *Ten Books on Architecture*, Vitruvius states that each town and house of the wealthy should have a library, preferably facing east to catch the morning sun. Roman officials and philanthropists saw it as their duty to construct them for the populace, creating in the process some of the most magnificent buildings, such as the Library of Ephesus, built by the Proconsul of Asia, Celsus ...”

*Thank you, Peter.*

[The Extent of the Roman Empire](#)

[The 9 Most Important Cities of the Roman Empire](#)

[Rome's Transition from Republic to Empire](#)

[Celsus Library: Architectural Marvel of Ephesus](#)

[Ephesus: UNESCO Gallery](#)

*NOTE: Links provided have been limited to web pages with minimal advertising.*

### **Italian American Press**

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – culture, history, memoirs, art, family, food, sports, 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.

Authors: Support your readers. If you learn someone has purchased your book through your listing on the IAP, reach out and thank them for supporting our culture, heritage, and history.

### **New on the Italian American Press**

[The Rock in Our Story](#) by JR Giuliano

Growing up in a loving home provides a foundation of security, even if the home is a monastery in southern Italy. What happens, though, when a 10-year old orphan is pulled from one loving environment and pushed to another, forced to start over with a new family in a new country?

*The Rock in our Story* travels through the pre-teen to young adult lives of two Italian immigrants as they face the struggles and accomplishments of growing up in America in the 1920s. It was a tough time for Italian immigrants, coping with rampant discrimination and damaging stereotypes, but their values – built on a solid foundation – provided the determination to overcome the obstacles.

Written from each characters viewpoint, *The Rock in our Story* provides an understanding of their reactions to circumstances and shows how they evolve as they interact with others. The inspiring poem “Desiderata” is in the Afterword, but its underlying theme of sincerity emanates throughout the book. The story and poem are a beautiful gift of love.

From the interview

**What inspired you to write the book?**

My life is rooted in the culture and customs of Italy, where I grew up in an ethnic neighborhood comprised of nearly all Italian immigrants. Living among such a large community sharing heritage, family values, and determination to protect them was a warm, welcoming, and safe place to call home.

**What is the most important attribute of the book?**

Almost anyone can identify with the emotions that arise from trying times, the disappointment that comes from unsuccessful attempts to achieve sought-after goals, and the joy that results from kindness, loving, and being loved.

**Why should someone read it?**

Perhaps to discover that, as much as we are different, we are all the same.

[Read entire interview on the IAP.](#)

[Book Review on \*La Gazzetta Italiana\*](#)

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**Italian Heritage is Important**

[Famous Italians You Probably Never Heard Of](#) by Peter V. Tafuri

For various reasons, Italian ancestry has been hidden or obscured, sometimes unknowingly but sometimes by those who know their Italian heritage. Historian Peter V. Tafuri combines his interest and knowledge of Italian history to publish *Famous Italians You Probably Never Heard Of*. From Peter: “Drawn from 3000 years of Italian history, each article provides a concise, informative and entertaining presentation of the remarkable men and women who made their contributions to the world, but may not have received the same recognition as their better known compatriots. ... The book is written in chronological order, starting with the days of the ancient Greek colonies in Italy and ending in the Twentieth Century. Historical background information ties it all together, but it can also be read at random, since each chapter is an easy to digest two to five pages. Even people who were bored by history in school have found the book a delight and full of surprises.”

*Famous Italians You Probably Never Heard Of* is a classic history book reflecting on the culture and heritage of Italians.

**Italian American Heritage Project**

Last October – just in time for Columbus Day – a documentary produced, in part, by Spain’s public broadcasting company and the University of Granada was released as a special event. Playing into the numerous controversies surrounding Columbus, the presentation was extensively marketed to a worldwide audience and reported by top media outlets declaring that Columbus’s DNA revealed he was not of Italian descent.

Publications proclaimed the astonishing fact that Columbus had a new genetic identity and was “from Western Europe.” Are they not aware that the boot-shaped peninsula jutting into the Mediterranean Sea – although sometimes classified as Southern Europe – is also part of Western Europe?

The timing of the video presentation was certainly coordinated to take advantage of Columbus Day and the negative connotations of Italian and Italian American history, heritage, and culture so accepted in American society. It wasn’t until a few days later that criticism regarding the credibility of the methodology was raised. Experts in genealogy questioned how a conclusion had been determined, without adherence to the [scientific method](#).

From [El País](#) (daily newspaper published in Spain): “It seems easy to use the power of DNA to claim that Columbus was a Sephardic Jew born on the Iberian Peninsula, but all the experts who spoke to EL PAÍS argue it is impossible to reach such a conclusion.” On [MSN](#), “But the scientific community has urged caution about this

interpretation, as the research has only been presented in the documentary film and not in a peer-reviewed journal, meaning the results were not scrutinized and checked by other scientists.”

Reports about the documentary included several comments from José Antonio Lorente, Professor of Legal and Forensic Medicine at the University and lead researcher of the project. Among his claims that “there are traits compatible with Jewish origin,” and the DNA samples are “very partial, but sufficient,” he states, “the outcome is almost absolutely reliable.” Almost absolutely?

The professor also said “the complete and detailed scientific results of the research on what this documentary film on the origin of Columbus is based, will be presented at a press conference in November. The data will also be submitted to an academic journal for peer-reviewed publication, he said.” (Quoted from the MSN article noted above.)

Online research did not produce any results for a press conference by Lorente in November 2024. Instead, a [November 25th, El País](#) article entitled “Presentation of Analysis on Christopher Columbus’ Alleged Remains Postponed Indefinitely” was the only notification of the update. According to a statement by Lorente, “The large amount of data that is being included in the publication makes the scientific work to be published especially dense and complex, so we are working intensively to be able to meet the necessary requirements and publish it as soon as possible.”

From the article: “Although no comprehensive study has yet been published, the documentary aired on Spanish television last month made world headlines. ... Antonio Alonso, one of Spain’s foremost authorities on forensic genetics” notes, “Unfortunately, from a scientific point of view, no assessment can be made after watching the documentary, since it does not provide any data on what has been analyzed.”

Why didn’t this make headline news in America? Have any of the nationwide Italian American organizations looked into this?

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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?](#) (Updated links.)

[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

## **Upcoming Events**

**January 21st to January 25th**

**Peppe Voltarelli, Calabrian Singer, Songwriter, Actor and Writer**

**Concerts: Massachusetts, New York City, Vermont**

From the press release: “After recording it in New York City, Peppe Voltarelli returns to the United States to present his brand new album ‘La grande corsa verso Lupionòpolis’ (‘The great race to Lupionòpolis’).

[Listen to Peppe](#) (YouTube)

[Ticket Information](#)

**Now to April 13th**

**Pompeii: The Exhibition**

[Graceland Exhibition Center, Memphis, TN](#)

Through 150 artifacts, “Pompeii: The Exhibition” tells the tale of a city hidden from view and forgotten for centuries.

**February 28th to April 4th**

[Il Volo World Tour 2024/2025 is coming to North America!](#)

Piero Barone, Ignazio Boschetto, and Gianluca Ginoble continue to captivate audiences worldwide with a series of prestigious live performances, highlighting the trio’s enduring global success.

[Ticket Information](#)

[Read my articles in La Gazzetta Italiana](#)

[The Columbian Exchange](#) (December 2024)

## **Italian American News**

[Everything Old is New Again](#) (italic.org; January 14, 2025)

[We Hear Your Concerns](#) (italic.org; January 5, 2025)

[Chicago’s Italian Women: Second To None](#) (italic.org; December 31, 2024)

[The Mafia Movie Business](#) (italic.org; December 1, 2024)

## **News About Italy**

[Sicily, European Region of Gastronomy 2025](#) (visitsicily.info)

[Amerigo Vespucci World Tour](#) (tourvespucci.it; December, 2024)

[Made of Sterner Stuff](#) (italic.org; December 29, 2024)

[The Jubilee: A Sacred Tradition in the Catholic Church](#) (wetheitalians.com; December 25, 2024)

[CNN Gets Rare Access to St. Peter’s Basilica](#) (cnn.com; December 23, 2024)

[‘It’s Pure Beauty’ - Italy’s Largest Medieval Mosaics Restored](#) (msn.com; December 23, 2024)

[Secret Passageway Through One of Italy’s Most Famous Cityscapes Opens to Public for First Time](#) (cnn.com; December 21, 2024)

