



Il Notiziario

[The Newsletter]
of the

Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.



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Volume 2, Issue 3

Editor: A.A. Grillo

Summer: July 1, 2021

News from our Executive Board

by Frank B. Bruno

Buon Giorno Cugini,

Well, we are in our 7th month of 2021 and it seems our country is opening up for business and getting back to normal. It's great to get our lives back on track. Your Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc. (FOI) board members have been busy getting ready for our biggest event ever, "That's Italian" Dinner and Show. More on that later.

We have established representation for all the sister cities with Isola delle Femmine in the form of FOI Chapters, which include Pittsburg, Monterey, and Martinez. The FOI Chapters will act as our liaison between FOI and the officials of each sister city. In turn, FOI will interact with Isola delle Femmine through their interface group led by Tonino Scala. The Chapter Directors and their committees are vital to the success of FOI's goals and objectives. We want to thank those FOI members that have stepped up to assist in this important addition to our organization.

For the Pittsburg Chapter Director, we have asked Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce President Wolfgang Croskey. He accepted and is willing to change his last name to Croskini, just kidding. We are thankful for his interest, expertise, and experience with Pittsburg city officials and businesses, which are important to getting things done.

For the FOI Monterey Chapter, Salvatore Ferrante of Ferrante Construction has agreed to be the director. Salvatore is a well-known advocate of Italian Sicilian Heritage in the Monterey area. He is involved in the Italian Heritage Society and most of Monterey's festivals including the Santa Rosalia Festival. We are grateful to have him aboard.

In Martinez, several members that have agreed to assist in the Chapter. For the Chapter Directorship, Mike Inzerillo agreed to take the lead. He has many talented and influential Martinez citizens to assist him; Daniel Pellegrini, Mary Goodman, Michael J. DiMaggio, and Cindi Collins Erickson make up the committee.

In the beginning of this year the new mayor of Isola, Orazio Nevoloso along with a few city officials announced they may attend our October 2 event. Now the placement of the Sister City FOI Chapters has become more vital than ever. We thank the members who are taking on these important roles that will help FOI achieve our goals.

We will hold an Old Fashion Sicilian-American Family Pic Nic at the Martinez bocce court area on July 10th. We will present our first FOI college scholarships to the 6 recipients that were awarded \$1,000 each to help with college costs. Danny Pellegrini and his crew will provide lunch of BBQ'd Sicilian sausage from Pittsburg's Parkside Market with all the fixings. It should be an opportunity to visit with family and friends just like we used to do when we were kids at Mitchell's Canyon Park or Marsh Creek Park. Remember those days? We're sorry if you missed buying tickets, the event is now sold out. Thank you to the Martinez chapter for their help making this such a success.

We are getting ready for our BIG event of the year, "That's Italian" Dinner Show on October 2, to be held at the Colombo Club in Oakland. It is developing into a spectacular event. Tickets are on sale now and they're going fast. We are limited in the number of people we can have attend so get your tickets before we reach the limit. Go to friendsofisola.org and buy your tickets on line NOW!

It is going to be a spectacular event. Family, great food, memorable Italian entertainment, great memories made. Don't miss it. **See you all there.**

To preserve, protect, and promote the Italian-Sicilian cultural heritage among the descendants, immigrants, citizens and friends of Isola delle Femmine, Sicily and around the world.

Co-founder & Chairman of the Board: V.S. Di Maggio, Co-founder & President: F.B. Bruno,
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News from Isola
by Sal Coniglio

Festa della Repubblica and More

Holidays or holy days are both important in Sicilian life, providing opportunities to visit with family and friends, opportunities to renew traditions of the special day and, of course, to remember and recognize the reason that the day is set aside.

The month of June, which just ended, includes two important days of celebration. The Festa della Repubblica [Republic Day] on 2-June marks the establishment of the Italian Republic. If you remember the Italian history, most of the independent regions of Italy were united under King Emanuele II, King of Savoy, who agreed to rule the newly established monarchy. The date of 17-Mar-1861 marks the beginning of the Italian monarchy, which came soon after the defeat of the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies led by Garibaldi. The Pope did not allow the papal states to join the kingdom until 20-Sep-1870. That finally allowed the capital to be moved to Rome, the ancestral capital. Mussolini and the Fascists usurped the rule of the Monarchy bringing Italy into World War II. Once Mussolini was executed and the war finally ended, the Italian people were tired of both the Fascists and the Monarchy and overwhelmingly approved a referendum to oust the monarchy and establish the Republic. This then became the third, and I believe the most important, day marking the establishment of the country we know as Italy. The date of this referendum is the day of the Festa della Repubblica, 2-June. It usually includes a civil celebration in most towns and cities as well as special celebrations in Rome. The mayor of Isola, Orazio Nevoloso, officiated over a brief ceremony in Piazza di Pittsburg this year.

Then at the end of June, the 29th is the feast day of San Pietro Apostolo [St. Peter the Apostle] who is also the patron saint of Isola delle Femmine. For this festa, the statue of San Pietro is carried from the town's church, the Chiesa Maria Santissima delle Grazie, and taken to the harbor area to bless the fishing fleet. This reenacts the blessing of the fishermen and their boats dating back to when fishermen first came to this shore to fish. See more about this in the section I Ricordi d'Isola later in this issue.

You can see that Sicilian/Italian heritage is strongly supported and enjoyed in Isola delle Femmine.

One last bit of news concerns our continued watch on Covid-19. Conditions in Isola are improving though not as quickly as here in California. The rate of vaccinations is increasing as the vaccine is now much more available. We will continue to report on this from our sources in Isola.

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What's Happening

by Mary Pappas-Coniglio

We are extremely happy to finally announce that our *That's Italian* festa is on! Tickets are on sale now.






That's Italian

Dinner & Show

NEW DATE
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2021

Colombo Club
5321 Claremont Avenue
Oakland, California 94618

4:30 NO HOST COCKTAILS
DINNER 6 PM – SHOW 8 PM
\$75 DONATION PER PERSON
NO TICKETS SOLD AT THE DOOR

After dinner show will include Entertainers:
Nicky “D”, Erasmo Aiello, Lou Esposito II, Leandra Ramm,
Josie Esposito, Jim Coniglio, Stephanie Satterwhite

Menu: Colombo Club Family Style
Antipasto, Garden Salad, Meat Ravioli, Italian Pot Roast,
Potatoes, Vegetables, Colombo Club Wine, Desert & Coffee

friendsofisola.org

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I Ricordi d'Isola [Memories of Isola]

by Sal Coniglio

The Church and Cemetery of Isola delle Femmine – Maria Santissima delle Grazie

Religious traditions, churches and customs have always been at the center of Sicilian Community life. When fishermen from Capaci started to launch their fishing boats from where Isola delle Femmine is now located, even before they built homes there, an altar was built near the site of the town's eventual church, only a little closer to the present harbor. The fishermen would gather there and pray before taking their boats out. The community of Isola delle Femmine was originally settled by these fishermen from Capaci because the seashore of Isola was easily accessible. Capaci is about 3 miles away.

In 1860, the Chiesa Maria Santissima delle Grazie was built in the town's main piazza along with a very small burial site under the church. In 1910, a new church was built at the same site and all of the graves in the underground burial site were moved to the new, present location of Isola's cemetery.



Chiesa Maria Santissima delle Grazie in Isola's Piazza Umberto I



Procession on 2-Jul
Festa della Madonna Maria
Santissima delle Grazie

Traditions continue today. On 29-Jun, the Festa di San Pietro, the patron saint of Isola, is celebrated. His statue is carried from the church to that same place near the harbor to bless the fishing fleet. Then on 2-Jul, the community celebrates the Festa della Madonna Maria SS. delle Grazie. A special mass is held followed by a procession through most of the streets of Isola with music. The citizens of Isola participate in the procession including children who join wearing their Holy Communion outfits.

I was baptized, confirmed and received Holy Communion, and was as an altar server in this church when I was young. If your ancestors came from Isola like many of ours, chances are they were also members of this church. It continues to serve and be a viable part of family life for the people of Isola today.

Once the church in Isola delle Femmine was rebuilt and the larger cemetery consecrated, it became everyone's final resting place. In a short walk through the cemetery you can see many familiar names and faces.

Many visitors to Isola visit the cemetery to try to find the names of relatives. In 1981 when my mother-in-law Leonore Lombardo Pappas visited Isola with our family, she very much wanted to visit the graves of her grandfathers. To her disappointment she was told that after more than 100 years the old graves are reconstructed and all of the old bones are removed and placed in the small communal concrete coffins that line the inside walls of the cemetery. One such coffin can be seen in the far back-left corner of the cemetery picture. The monument at the center of the picture is to honor the Unknown Soldier.



Inside Isola's Cemetery.
A coffin for recovered bones is at far back-left corner.
Central monument to honor the Unknown Soldier.

[Pictures courtesy of Orazio Sansonini]

A Bit of History that Is Ours

by Vince S. Ferrante

LOCAL FISH CANNING INDUSTRY BEGINNINGS – Part 1

This two-part article will look at the local fish canning business in Pittsburg, Martinez and Monterey. Part 1 in this issue will focus on the early beginnings of the fish canneries in Pittsburg, following them into the 1920's. Part 2 will highlight early Martinez and Monterey canning. The canning industry started during the gold rush era in 1852 along the Sacramento Delta. William Hume began a salmon canning venture on a barge near Sacramento. The early canning process was a cumbersome manual one. Chinese laborers kept busy in these early canneries making tin cans by hand, tapping each can with a hammer to see if they leaked. With the advent and development of machinery, canneries soon began to spread throughout the northwest, wherever the fish were being caught in large numbers.

The size of early Sacramento Delta commercial fishing is provided in the 1882 History of Contra Costa County:

There are employed in the salmon fisheries between San Francisco and Sacramento about 800 boats. Each boat is manned by two fishermen. There are, therefore, one thousand six hundred men employed in catching salmon between the two points named or in a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. There are two hundred and fifty boats in the Straits of Carquinez alone. There are nine canneries along the river and Suisun Bay [west of Pittsburg] and several in San Francisco averaging between 60-80 men in each establishment. There are, therefore, no less than two thousand five hundred men employed in taking salmon and canning them for home and foreign consumption.

PITTSBURG

The Sacramento River Packers Association built two canneries both managed by J.P. Haller. One was located in New York Landing at Black Diamond (present day Pittsburg) in about 1875 started by Sydney Booth. The other was across the river on Chipps Island owned by Sol Wangenheim. Early on, these two canneries competed against each other until they formed a Trust. The Sicilian fishermen were known to drive a hard bargain when negotiating price. The Trust allowed the cannery owners better leverage with which to negotiate. The article in the first issue of *Il Notiziaro* stated that the Aiello brothers arrived in Black Diamond about 1878. The newly found work of R.S. Dondero corrects this to be 1870. Significant immigration from Isola and other Sicilian villages then started in mid to late 1870s, coinciding with the start of Booth's cannery. Eventually, the Chipps Island location was closed and operations were consolidated at the Black Diamond plant. In the early years, operation was mediocre until more careful and systematic processes were put in place with William Croxson as Superintendent. Other early canneries in Black Diamond included the Limberger Cannery canning turtles (who knew?) and the Pioneer Canning Company owned by King Morse of San Francisco. The water tower for the Black Diamond plant also supplied the city with water through its state-of-the-art filtration process.



Original Booth Cannery
with River Barge Docked in Foreground
Building at the Extreme Left
Later Replaced by a Concrete & Steel One
Source: Fishing II Binder, Pittsburg HSA Library

F.E. Booth (1863-1941), the son of Sydney, arrived in Black Diamond in 1881 to assist his father and was initially in charge of sales and marketing for the Black Diamond plant. By 1889, at the tender age of 26, he was made manager of the whole consolidated operation and became President of the Sacramento River Packers Association. He was also the first secretary of the North Alaska Salmon Company. He came of age at the Black Diamond Cannery, and

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in 1905, he formed his own company, which ultimately took over the Association's Black Diamond plant. By 1909, the cannery employed 400 persons, shipping its output to all parts of the United States as well as many foreign ports. Women played an integral role in the fish cannery work force. In later years, Marie Grillo Gibson was cited as being the best fish butcher at the A Paladini cannery. (Pittsburg Press article dated 25-Sep-1974, found in the Pittsburg Historical Society Museum Archive)

To assure his supply of fresh fish, three boats would work the delta collecting the catch directly from the fishing boats. By 1925, he employed 25 men in and around the Pittsburg Plant and contracted the catch of fish from about 150 fishermen. The plant also mild-cured shad and salmon, preserved by smoking, to be sold in New York and Germany. Booth reportedly owned the first steam ship on the Sacramento Delta, named the Napa City, to haul fruits and vegetables to the cannery under special contracts with growers at various ports up river. His cannery became one of the largest packers of California fruits and vegetables and the leading operator in California fresh fish.

From an article in the Pittsburg Post, dated 1927, found in the Pittsburg Historical Society Museum Archive:

Approximately 85 carloads of fish equivalent to 3,000,000 pounds leave Pittsburg for the east every year from the six fish companies in this city. These companies are the Standard Fish Co., The San Francisco International Fish Co., the Davi Fishery, F.E. Booth Co., the Western California Co. and A. Paladini. [Not mentioned was that the San Joaquin Fish Cannery founded here by Frank Cardinali joined forces with the Paladini Co. of San Francisco in 1922, an association that would last until 1957 when the local commercial fishing was outlawed.] ... The chief volume of business comes in the spring when the salmon and shad are running in local waters. Although salmon is the most popular kind of fish handled by Pittsburg concerns, there is a huge annual catch of several other kinds, ... Sardines are also becoming an important local product. These are canned exclusively by the F.E. Booth Canning Co. which began putting up sardines last year as an experiment, meeting with such success that there will be three times as much production as last year ...

My father Vince often shared stories of his father Ratz Ferrante and Uncles Joe and Tony on their 85' purse seiner The New Admiral, home port Monterey. On occasion the sardines fishing grounds would take them to the Farallon Islands. They would then offload their catch at the Pittsburg Booth Cannery as opposed to going back to Monterey.

More from the 1927 article:

There are about 60 men that may be called steady fishermen in Pittsburg. These are men that have their homes and families here and who stay here year around, instead of going to Alaska or San Pedro as some men do. Those who travel from place to place [principally Alaska, San Pedro and San Diego] number 200 more men, ...

This predominantly Sicilian-American workforce provided the catch for the local canneries for over 80 years.

By 1929 F.E. Booth built a new state of the art concrete plant expanding his sardine operations, adding 225 employees to total 500. He then had a fleet of nine purse seiners extending his sardine fishery to beyond the Golden Gate.

From a humble beginning, working with a wash boiler and a hand soldering outfit in the Sacramento Delta, the Booth operation grew to be a major part of the Delta economy until commercial fishing was outlawed here, but his operation in Monterey continued to grow larger earning him the title "The Sardine King" as we will see in Part 2.

His integrity and fair dealings with his employees earned him great affection and respect throughout Pittsburg.

Sources:

Looking Back III "Tales of Italian Fishing Pioneers of Pittsburg, Monterey and Alaska" by Earl Hohlmayer (2002).

J.P. Munro-Fraser, *History of Contra Costa County*, W.A. Slocum and Co. (1882).

John R. Light, *A History of Commercial Fishing Industry of Pittsburg California*, self-published for sale Pittsburg HSA museum.

R.S. Dondero, "The Italian Settlement of San Francisco", Masters Thesis, University of California Berkeley (1950).

Mangiate Bene Tutti [Eat Well Everyone]

by Mary Pappas-Coniglio "Mary's Village Style" on Facebook, Instagram & YouTube
or on our Website: https://friendsofisoladellefemmine.org/food_travel/

Cooking with Mary's Village Style

Our committee recently had dinner at Frank & Robin Bruno's Home and Robin made a delicious pasta sauce. I thought I would share her recipe with all of you.

Robin Bruno's Pasta Sauce with Sausage and Raisins



Frank Bruno's Grandmother Annie Belleci Di Maggio was a forelady at Western California Cannery in the 1950's. She worked with many of our mothers and grandmothers canning tomatoes, asparagus and making catsup. She raised 5 children in Pittsburg. Annie was born in Isola delle Femmine and came to Pittsburg in 1898 at the age of 3. Annie passed this recipe down to Frank and Robin who have been making it for more than 40 years

- 2 Tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 3 Cloves Garlic, chopped
- Fresh Basil Leaves (handful)
- 1 cup Raisins
- 1 Teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes
- 1 Medium Red Onion, chopped
- 6 White Mushrooms, cut into small pieces
- 1 pound Italian Ground Sausage, Browned and drained (Parkside Sausage from Pittsburg)
- 1 Teaspoon Italian Seasoning
- 24 oz. Can of Tomato Sauce
- 14.5 oz. Can of Fire Roasted Diced Tomatoes
- Red Wine to taste
- ½ Teaspoon Salt
- ½ Teaspoon Black Pepper

Brown ground sausage in separate pan, drain and set aside.

Sauté onion in olive oil until translucent under medium heat, stirring frequently.

Add pepper flakes, garlic and mushrooms to the onions and sauté all until tender.

Cook under medium heat.

When mixture is heated add reserve browned ground sausage.

Add tomato sauce and diced tomatoes.

Add salt and pepper and about ½ cup red wine to taste and simmer for 30 minutes.

Add Raisins and fresh chopped basil.



Left: Jennie DiMaggio Bruno, Frank Bruno's Mother
Right: Annie Belleci DiMaggio, Jennie's mother
& Frank's Grandmother

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New Members of Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.

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Tom Russo	Jack Lucido	Dennis Gabellini

more to be published in future issues

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Lisa Dondero	John Lineweaver	Vincent & Roselyn Malfitano
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