



# Italian Historical Society of America

## Newsletter

OCTOBER 2009

BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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

Today is Columbus Day. The real Columbus Day when 517 years ago Cristoforo Colombo—a native of Genoa, Italy—discovered a new continent.

Yes, although the land was inhabited, Colombo “discovered” it for the Europeans. At [Merriam-Webster Online](#), the definitions of “discover” are “to make known or visible,” and “to obtain sight or knowledge of for the first time.” It was Columbus who made the islands known and visible to the Europeans, and his landing and subsequent journals provided knowledge for expanded exploration.

At [yourdictionary.com](#), “the best online dictionary,” discover means (1.) “to be the first to find out, see, or know about,” (2.) “to find out, learn of the existence of; realize,” (3.) “to be the first nonnative person to find, come to, or see (a continent, river, etc.)” and (4.) “to bring to prominence; make famous.”

Every definition above supports that Colombo did discover a new continent.

### **Fascinating Facts About Columbus**

(Because he is better known in America as Columbus, I will use that name.)

For close to two weeks, I’ve been researching the life of Christopher Columbus. I’ve learned some fascinating facts, found a plethora of misinformation, and have read some completely misguided, biased, and ignorant remarks.

To honor Columbus Day, his biography has been updated and many new resources have been added in the [Explorer](#) category (scroll down) at Thirty-One Days of Italians.

On his [third voyage](#) in 1498, Columbus and his crew were the first to see the new continent, sailing along the coast of what is now Venezuela. He found the mouth of the Orinoco River and determined that because it was fresh water, the land he saw was a continent.

On his [fourth voyage](#) in 1502, Columbus sailed along the east coast of Central America and established a fort on the isthmus of Panama. He was not the first to explore the isthmus, but he heard about the

ocean on the other side; bad weather and an attack on the fort prevented him from further exploration.

Before the country was named the United States of America, there was talk of naming the country after Columbus. Washington, D.C. (District of Columbia), and many towns in America chose to honor Columbus by using the feminized version of his name.

Many know that the first major Columbus Day celebration was held by the Tammany Society in 1792 for the tricentennial. The Tammany Society was named after Chief Tamanend, ruler of a clan of the Delaware Indians. The Society took the additional name of the Columbian Order, in honor of Columbus, taking the position that both Chief Tamanend and Christopher Columbus were the Society's patrons.

In 1855, Randolph Rogers was commissioned to sculpt the doors for the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. The [Columbus Doors](#) depict Columbus and the events of his life, and are based on the design of the [doors](#) on the [Battistero di San Giovanni](#) in Florence, Italy. (Italian immigrant [Constantino Brumidi](#) painted [The Apotheosis of Washington](#) on the ceiling of the Rotunda.)

The *Pledge of Allegiance* was written by [Francis Bellamy](#) for the 400th Anniversary celebration of Christopher Columbus.

[\*Saint Tammany and the Origin of the Society of Tammany or the Columbian Order in the City of New York\*](#) by Edwin P. Kilroe

[\*Columbus and Columbia: A Brief Survey of the Early Creation of the Columbus Symbol in American History\*](#) by Delno C. West and August Kling (1989)

[The Columbus Doors: The Stories and Symbolism](#)

### **Columbus Controversy**

It seems each year the negative press supercedes the positive when referring to Columbus. The article "[A darker side of Columbus emerges in US classrooms](#)," written by an Associated Press reporter, has quickly circulated and been reported through various media. (Thanks, Jeff.) The writer mentions how school children throughout America are putting Columbus on trial and finding him guilty of "misrepresenting the Spanish crown and thievery."

Much of the information against Columbus is distributed by a group called [Rethinking Columbus](#). The group claims that "the Columbus myth is a foundation of children's beliefs about society. Columbus is often a child's first lesson about encounters between different cultures and races. The murky legend of a brave adventurer tells children whose version of history to accept, and whose to ignore. It says nothing about the brutality of the European invasion of North America."

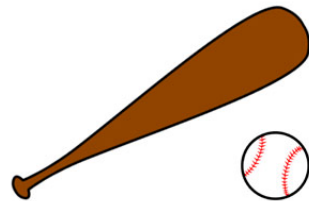
In today's diversified and electronically connected world, children have many opportunities to learn about "different cultures and races" before they even start school. Informing children that a man who set out on a voyage based on years of study, determination, and skill is a "murky legend of a brave adventurer" discredits exploration and history. The group claims teaching that Columbus was a brave explorer "tells children whose version of history to accept," but it makes no qualms about its version and how "Rethinking Columbus has changed the way schools teach about the 'discovery of America.'"

As many readers know, this change in the way schools teach children has caused misinformation and hatred to erupt. Teaching on fact is acceptable, but teaching on opinion is questionable, especially when teaching children.

Two articles about Columbus Day that celebrate Italian heritage (Thanks, John T.):

[Italian stoneworker's Scranton work includes courthouse statue](#)

[UNICO ceremony today at Carbondale's Columbus statue](#)



### **Italian Americans in Baseball**

From OSIA: "The National Ethnic Heritage Foundation in partnership with the Order of Sons of Italy in America is proud to announce the first ever limited edition set of Heritage Cards honoring Italian American Baseball Heroes from the pioneer Buttercup Dickerson in 1878 to Dodger manager Joe Torre in 2009." The cards are offered as a gift for a donation to OSIA. For more information about the collection, visit [OSIA](#).

A list of [Italian American managers of the major baseball teams](#) of 2009 is on the Italian Historical Society of America website. (Thanks, John L.)

Promoting Italian and Italian American Heritage

The [Italian Historical Society of America](#) has recently updated its website, adding many new features that make it easy to navigate, and great graphics for visual appeal. The home page currently highlights the [2009 List of Thirty-One Days of Italians in PDF](#), that maintains its format when opening and makes it easy to print the one-page document for ease in distributing. We still have 19 days of Italian American Heritage Month. (Apologies to those who had difficulties printing the formatted Word List I sent with the newsletter last month.) The IHSA also has back issues of *Tutto*

*Italiano*, dating to March 2007, and a great new format for the newsletters.

Leon J. Radomile, author of *Heritage Italian-American Style*, has updated his website. The [home page](#) has many new features and a link to take an Italian I.Q. test. As I wrote to Leon "I didn't do as well as I expected, ... but the second time I got all of them right!!" Read my review of [Heritage Italian-American Style](#).

I recently interviewed Vincenza Scarpaci, author of *The Journey of the Italians in America*, and have added my review of her book to [Italian Book Reviews](#). Her book is a beautiful pictorial that gives an historical overview of the progression of Italian immigrant to American citizen. [Read the full review](#).

Thirty-One Days of Italians has a new feature—Celebrating Our Heritage with [photographs of displays](#) that highlight Italian American heritage. The first photograph is from Valentina P. of California, and it's part of a huge window display she designed. Check out a copy of the list of Thirty-One Days of Italians in the lower left corner. This picture is lonely and would like some company. Send your photograph of an Italian heritage display with a brief description to be included on the website. If you provide an appropriate link to a website, it will be included.

### **I am Italian-American**

This [poem](#) has been around for a while, but it's a wonderful reminder of our heritage and of some of the great people who have contributed so much to America.



### **Articles of Interest**

Read my article about [Painting with Wine](#), published in the September issue of *La Gazzetta Italiana*. The article is posted on the paper's website, along with a beautiful painting by [Christina LoCascio](#).

Recent articles posted at suite101.com include [Celebrating Columbus Day](#), [Italian American Heritage Month](#), [Finding the Italian American Connection](#), [Teaching Italian American Heritage to Children](#), and [The Italian American Museum in New York City](#).

All my articles at suite101.com can be accessed through either [my profile](#) or [articles page](#), and if you have a news reader, you can [subscribe to my article feed](#).

## Thank You

Every month I receive notes from readers telling me how much they appreciate *Tutto Italiano* and letting me know that it is passed along to so many others. I thank all of you for your notes, I thank those that pass it along, and I thank everyone who reads *Tutto Italiano* and learns a little more about Italian and Italian American heritage, history, and culture.

Happy Columbus Day and enjoy the celebration of Italian American Heritage Month.

*Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,*

Janice Therese Mancuso

Author of [Con Amore](#)

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

Support Italian American History in America's Schools

[Make a donation for Italian American Education](#)

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**Please Note:** 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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