



Italian Historical Society of America

Newsletter

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

When [Charles VII of Naples](#) – also known as [Charles of Bourbon](#) and the King of Naples and Sicily, and later became King Charles III of Spain in 1759 – wanted to build a palace in the region he ruled, he chose the town of [Caserta](#), located a little more than 20 miles almost directly north of Naples.

Charles (great-great grandson of Louis XIV) was the first in the Bourbon dynasty to rule Naples (from 1734 to 1759) as a sovereign state; his father, Phillip V, had ruled under the Spanish crown. Three palaces had already been built – two by Charles – when he decided to build a palace that would be the center of his Naples dynasty, not only housing all administrative segments of the monarchy, but also the educational, social, and cultural divisions. The property was already owned by the royal family and the site of a hunting lodge. It was also considered more defensible, safer against an attack by sea and further away from Mt. Vesuvius.

Master architect [Luigi Vanvitelli](#) was commissioned to design the [Royal Palace of Caserta](#) and its surrounding grounds, using Versailles as a comparative model, and construction began in 1752. Charles was active in overseeing the palace's progress, but seven years later, he abdicated to become king of Spain, and made his son, Ferdinand (who was eight years old), successor. A regency council was formed to govern the kingdom until Ferdinand turned sixteen. In the meantime, Vanvitelli continued to supervise construction, also working on an aqueduct stretching almost 24 miles from the foothills of the Apennines to Caserta. In ten years, the [Carolino Aqueduct](#) would tunnel through mountains and rise over a valley to bring water to the palace grounds, the city, and adjoining farms.

A year after Ferdinand IV – of Naples, Ferdinand III of Sicily, and from 1816 to 1825, King of the Two Sicilies – came to rule, he married Maria Carolina of Austria (older sister of Marie Antoinette). The Queen of Naples took an active roll in the governing of the kingdom. She was also instrumental in the creation of the [English Garden](#), requesting its design surpass the [Gardens of the Petit Trianon](#), the small estate on the grounds of Versailles overseen by her sister, Marie.

Vanvitelli died in 1773 and after work was halted for a few years, his son took over the project. The palace contains five stories with 1,200 rooms, a library of about 14,000 various publications, a [chapel](#) (damaged during World War II, and restored), and a [theatre](#) replicating the [Teatro di San Carlo](#) in Naples, the oldest opera house in the world (established in 1737 by Charles VII of Naples).

The palace – closely resembling a large open square with its interior divided into four equally-shaped courtyards – is set among almost 300 acres of landscaped grounds with ponds, rolling hills, trails, native and botanical plants, and even a setting of simulated Roman ruins. The back of the palace is positioned with a telescopic view of over a mile of reflective pools showcasing ornate fountains and featuring a backdrop of a waterfall. The grounds also include the [San Leucio](#) complex of a silk production plant, now a museum, and housing for the employees and their families.

The Bourbons ruled in Naples until the Risorgimento and then the unification of Italy. In 1923, the palace was home to the Italian Air Force Academy; and in 1943, when Italy joined with the United States and other nations against Germany and Japan, the

palace was the location of the Allied Force Headquarters in the Mediterranean region. The palace, grounds, aqueduct, and San Leucio complex were inscribed on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#) in 1997, as “exceptional for the way in which it brings together a magnificent palace with its park and gardens, as well as natural woodland, hunting lodges and a silk factory. It is an eloquent expression of the Enlightenment in material form, integrated into, rather than imposed on, its natural setting.”

[The Caroline Aqueduct and Luigi Vanvitelli's Challenge](#)

[Spanish Bourbon Kings of Naples](#)

[Urban Life in Naples](#) (Early Eighteenth Century)

[Reggia di Caserta Exterior](#) (YouTube)

[Royal Palace of Caserta Interior](#) (YouTube)

[Italy from Above - Beautiful Flying Journeys from Caserta to Tivoli](#) (YouTube)

From the Italian American Press

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – childrens, memoirs, art, history, 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.

Read the book review for [The Seven Golden Apples](#) on [La Gazzetta Italiana](#).

New Book: [The Ghosts of the Garfagnana, Seven Strange Stories from Haunted Tuscany](#) by Paul Salsini

In the northwest region of Tuscany – an area of steep forests and misty valleys – is the Garfagnana, abundant with caves, ancient villages, marble quarries, and chestnut trees. It's the perfect location for a series of stories with a supernatural theme woven into everyday life. The first story takes place in 1225, with the announcement of a new monastery to be built; the last story is in 2018, as a college student travels to the Garfagnana to research ghosts in the theater.

Featured Author: Paul Salsini

Towards the end of World War II, after Italy signed with the Allies, the German army began its retreat, passing through the mountain villages of Northern Italy. In their path, they left a trail of atrocities, demolishing villages and obliterating lives.

When journalist Paul Salsini traveled to Italy on assignment, he visited the northern Tuscan town of his parents, and learned about the massacre of [Sant'Anna di Stazzema](#) from his cousin. In August 1944, 560 Italians were slaughtered; his cousin survived by escaping into the woods. The story remained with Paul, and after much research and subsequent visits to Tuscany, he wrote *The Cielo: A Novel of Wartime Tuscany*. It was the first in his “A Tuscan Series,” leading to five more books, and his newest collection of stories in *The Ghosts of the Garfagnana*.

Author Interview (Excerpt)

What inspired you to write *The Ghosts of the Garfagnana*?

Ever since I encountered “The Devil’s Bridge,” a beautiful structure at Borgo a Mozzano, I’ve been intrigued by the Garfagnana area of Tuscany. It’s fantastically beautiful but also rugged and, yes, mysterious.

What is the most important attribute of the book?

I think the span of the book, from the Middle Ages to the present, and all of them linked to one another, is compelling and informative.

Why should someone read it?

For pure enjoyment.

How did you decide on the time periods and characters for the stories in *The Ghosts of the Garfagnana*?

I've always wanted to write something set in the Middle Ages so this gave me the opportunity. I have loved researching that period. In addition to writing about the pageantry and the art and the history, I could also delve into the Black Death and the flagellants, and so on

You have also written a children's book, *Stefano and the Christmas Miracles*, and you are working on a sequel. What was the inspiration for the first book and for the sequel?

Stefano and the Christmas Miracles was inspired by a nativity set I have that was made by Fontanini, the Italian company.

Read the full interview on the [Italian American Press](#) and learn more about the books in "A Tuscan Series" and the new book Paul is writing.

Thirty-One Days of Italians

Who are the champions of our Italian American culture? What can we do to help preserve our Italian heritage?

In 2006, a record of Italians and Italian Americans who should be recognized for their extraordinary achievements was compiled and [Thirty-One Days of Italians](#) was created. The website features 74 names, but the annual List is limited to 31 – one for each day in October.

The first day in October honors the Italian immigrant and the last day is set aside to honor someone not on the List. Honorary Members are on the List every year. In alphabetical order, they are Father Pietro Bandini, Constantino Brumidi, Mother Francis Cabrini, Enrico Caruso, Christopher Columbus, Enrico Fermi, Amadeo Pietro Giannini, Guglielmo Marconi, Filippo Mazzei, Antonio Meucci, Maria Montessori, Andrea Palladio, Antonio Pasin, Arturo Toscanini, and Amerigo Vespucci.

Other names are rotated, giving everyone on Thirty-One Days of Italians a chance to have their day. The 2019-20 List includes (in alphabetical order) Father Michael Accolti, Helen Barolini, Joseph Barbera, Yogi Berra, Giovanni Caboto, Joe DiMaggio, Geraldine Ferraro, Lee Iacocca, Fiorello La Guardia, Vince Lombardi, Henry Mancini, Rocky Marciano, Dean Martin, and Frank Sinatra.

See the complete calendar of names and learn more about them – biographies have been updated and new resources have been added – at [Thirty-One Days of Italians 2019-20 List](#).

Italian American Heritage Project

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](#).

A petition was recently submitted to the city council of Chicago to abolish Columbus Day. In part, the petition states, "WHEREAS, the City of Chicago recognizes the Celebration of Columbus Day perpetuates violence against the Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities through the promotion of American Exceptionalism, which continues to be grounded in the ideologies of white supremacy; and WHEREAS, the Indigenous Populations of modern day Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Trinidad, Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as well as, the Bahamas, Cuba, Venezuela and Central America have never recuperated from the invasion, extraction and exploitation caused by Christopher Columbus' four trips across the Atlantic Ocean from Spain that laid the blue print for force removal, assimilation,

genocide and slavery throughout American history; and WHEREAS, establishing a Day to recognize the contributions of and diversity within Indigenous populations of the Western Hemisphere is appropriate and necessary to ensure these histories are not forgotten; and WHEREAS, the abolishment of Columbus Day promotes a more equitable and inclusive city for all Chicagoans ...”

The petition was written by a 20-year-old (with assistance from a councilmember) who “has been nationally recognized for his work on Indigenous rights and environmental justice. He is committed to educating the public on the widespread Indigenous genocide enacted by colonizers like Columbus.” See link to article below.

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In July, the [National Education Association adopted a Resolution](#) stating “The National Education Association believes that the history of colonization needs to be recognized and acknowledged in every state. To do so, the Association believes that the name of the current holiday known as ‘Columbus Day’ should be renamed and recognized as ‘Indigenous People’s Day’ in recognition of the early indigenous peoples who were living in the United States before colonization by European settlers.

Rationale/Background: As an education association, recognizing, observing, and celebrating factual history is important to maintaining our academic integrity.”

For factual history, educators can use the Lesson Plans I developed about the Columbus Letters. The Lesson Plans, created for four grade levels, have been downloaded 114 times; giving many children and teens a resource for learning to think rationally about Columbus.

[Learn about the Lesson Plans and how to access them.](#)

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America; Italian Americans do not have an organized defense. The statements of truth and facts posted on so many Italian American websites are not working. Italian Americans need a nationwide program to battle the campaign to abolish Columbus Day or it will be lost; even though Indigenous People already have a designated day, and Native Americans have a day and a month to celebrate their culture.

Native American Month – November  
Native American Heritage Day – November 28  
Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

The [Italian Cultural Society](#) – based in Sacramento, California – sponsors numerous events throughout the year. In the fall, it hosts an Italian-American Heritage Day and Columbus Day event with a series of educational and entertaining programs.

### **Italian American News**

[Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church cross removed as demolition starts](#) (Worcester, MA, Telegram; August 26, 2019)

[Chicago beat New York to open a pizza museum. Now it's closing.](#) (Chicago Tribune; August 23, 2019)

[For statues honoring women, NY first lady nixes vote-winner St. Frances](#) (LifeSiteNews; August 1, 2019)

[NY State Senator] [Addabbo Calls On The ‘She Built NYC’ Initiative To Include Mother Cabrini](#) (We The Italians, August 28, 2019)

[Community bids addio to George Randazzo](#) [founder of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame] (Fra Noi; August 14, 2019)

