

THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

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ABSTRACT

The vast influx of foreign immigrants to the United States in the early to mid-twentieth century is nothing short of astonishing. Many of these immigrants arriving in the early to mid-twentieth century could identify as Italian. There were millions that came to the United States from all regions of Italy, especially the Southern regions. The hard work and resilience of these people led to the creation of many vibrant Italian-American communities around New Jersey, most notably in Elizabeth and in the Chambersburg section of Trenton. Many of these immigrants also settled in the United States in the central region of New Jersey, in the small town of Princeton. These communities can be describe as vibrant due to the nature of most Italian immigrants being friendly and cheerful, and considering most all of their neighbors as family. Their struggles and their contributions to the town, like other many other immigrant groups before them, have been largely overshadowed by the grandiose image of Princeton University. Indeed, Italian immigrants who arrived in Princeton, New Jersey during the early to mid-twentieth century created a thriving, vibrant Italian-American community, whose impact can still be felt throughout the town. Be it their immaculate gardens, community centers and events, or decadent cuisine, Italian immigrants left quite a mark on Princeton, a success that can be shown in the many ways the town adapted to its newly acquired citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Countless Italian immigrants arrived in New Jersey during the early to mid-twentieth century, ranging from the northern towns, such as Torino to the southernmost parts in Sicily. For this research, however, "Italian Immigrant" shall be more narrowly defined. The definition will include immigrants arriving in the United States from the southern Italian region of Campagna, from the city of Naples and its surrounding metropolitan area, which includes the islands of Procida, Ischia and Capri. Immigrants arriving from the southern region of Calabria will also fall under the definition of Italian Immigrant, as will those emigrating from Pettoranello in the central region of Molise. These immigrants can also be defined by their language, as most did not speak the English language. Instead, they spoke in dialects of proper Italian, with speech varied from the true Italian language, to a southern *dialetti*, or dialect, spoke only on the remote islands off of Naples.¹ Furthermore, the definition will only include immigrants from these areas who settled in the area of Princeton, in Mercer County, New Jersey. The area of Princeton will include the town of Princeton, and the surrounding towns of Rocky Hill, and Belle Mead, New Jersey. The area of Princeton was chosen by these Italian immigrants to settle in for a multitude of reasons, which will be explored in this research through personal interviews with several Italian immigrants, and two first-generation Italian-Americans, all whom have resided in Princeton at pivotal moments in their lives, or still currently do live in Princeton. Newspaper articles from many of Princeton's collection of publications will also be used, as will several books and films about the Italian-American experience at large.

A GREAT MIGRATION

The total number of immigrants arriving in the United States from Italy over the course of the Twentieth Century totaled almost five million, with only Germany surpassing its numbers. Previous research by Rudolph Vecoli suggests that "by 1930, the more than half million first- and second-generation Italians constituted the largest foreign-stock group in the state, with over ten per cent of its total."² The number of Italians living in New Jersey grew from the mid-1800s on. "Few Italians were to be found in New Jersey before the Civil War. One of the earliest arrivals...settled in Trenton in 1800."³ From the area of Trenton, one could concede that it was easy for the Italian population to spread northeast to Princeton. The building boom around the University in the early 1900s created many jobs, which were sought after by the laboring immigrants. Prior to the late 1890s, there were very few Italian immigrants living in the Princeton area. "By 1910, the census documents significant numbers of Italian immigrant laborers living in the town."⁴ Once arriving in the area of Princeton, the many occupations held by Italian immigrants will come to outline this definition as well. Most immigrants, from both Calabria and Campagna, were very skilled laborers. The ornate masonry of Italy required intensive training and a complex skill set. Structures were built from terracotta, stucco and tile in Italy, but this was not the case in all corners of the world. Differences in climates and available materials necessitated specialized knowledge of materials and structures. Many had worked as masons and gardeners, and had extensive experience in creating beautiful and ornate homes and landscapes.

The reasons to leave Italy during this time were similar, no matter which region someone resided in. Major political changes brought new problems to the people of Italy. According to research conducted by the Historical Society of Princeton, "Increased taxation, industrialization and growing population changed life in the country's small villages...As the old ways of life became unable to support them, many were motivated to seek a new life in a new land."⁵ During World War II, the islands of Capri, Procida and Ischia were cut off from Naples, with ships normally used to bring supplies now being used by German troops. In the post-World War II era, this change was magnified by extreme poverty in some of the more remote southern areas. Old ways, and life in general, was not supported by this new, extreme poverty, so many Italians began to seek a new life elsewhere.⁶ According to Rudolf J. Vecoli, "The unification of Italy in 1861 had brought neither peace nor prosperity to the Italian South...poor land, tiny holdings, oppressive landlords and large families all tended to make the already hard lives of the *contadini* (peasants) even more difficult."⁷ Many Italians found that their old customs and lifestyles could be supported in new lands. The vast gardens that many Italians had kept in their homelands were recreated, "with larger yards filled with vegetable gardens and farm animals, life resembled that of an Italian village."⁸ Many more Italians who had returned to Italy before or during World War II, came back to the United States once the war had ended.⁹

FINDING EMPLOYMENT

Once they had reached their destination, beginning a new life meant that immigrants needed to find employment. Upon arrival, immigrants filled out a State of New Jersey Employment Registration card.¹⁰ This card listed the address of the worker, his marital status and members of his family, previous and current places of employment with wages, if the immigrant was searching for work, his physical condition and any pertinent notes on the worker. Family members listed on the card could also list their places of employment, or seek further employment. These cards were kept at the county court house, and men in need of work were recommended to local companies seeking labor. A sample card from Salvatore Balestrieri notes that he "has a barber chair and does some work on Saturdays" as well as being employed by Matthews Construction, a company that was instrumental in the growth of Princeton University, and employed many Italian workers.¹¹

In the area of Princeton, the first immigrants began work as poorly paid, hard-worked laborers. Documents from the Hudson Engineering and Contracting Company show that the first immigrants from Italy in the town of Princeton were "responsible for the digging of man-made Lake Carnegie."¹² These workers were "paid meager wages" and were "housed in crude makeshift huts around the lake."¹³ These

men meticulously dug out the lake, digging “with shovels, filling horse-drawn wagons with earth, and horses hauled the earth away.”¹⁴ Along with Lake Carnegie, early documents from 1902-1969 show that many immigrants were employed by Matthews Construction Company as stonemasons, carpenters and foremen to construct the distinctive architecture of Princeton University.¹⁵ “Others worked in the local Margerum and McCarthy Quarries breaking and hauling the Lockatong argillite, a flint-like gray and maroon stone used in the construction of many of Princeton University’s buildings.”¹⁶ In the late 1800s, around the same time they began appearing on the census in large numbers, Italians inhabited Rockingham, General Washington’s Revolutionary War headquarters.¹⁷ The men who worked at the quarries in nearby Rocky Hill, New Jersey, were said to be the very first Italian immigrants in the area. “For many of Princeton’s older Italian families, Rockingham is a landmark as the first American home of their ancestors.”¹⁸ Many of the men who worked in the quarry at Rocky Hill became the first Italians to settle in Princeton. One of the first documented immigrants to the area was Achille Carnevale, who arrived in America in 1884 at the age of fourteen. In autumn of 1983, his son, Raphael told the Princeton Recollector how his father came about the job in Rocky Hill. “See, there was work over at Rocky Hill at the quarry over there. And all the fellas used to flock over to the quarry... That was considered the capitol of the United States, I mean for Italians.”¹⁹ With the quarry next door to Princeton considered the “capitol of the United States” by many Italians, it is easy to then to see how Princeton’s Italian population grew so quickly. The move to Princeton was assisted by Achille Carnevale, for another entry in the Princeton Recollector denotes that Achilles “was instrumental in bringing the Italians to Princeton, particularly from Petronello di Molise.” The article further states that Achille “sponsored five or ten Italians at a time to come from Petronello and work for him. He would teach them the Constitution and then load them in his buckboard with straw and drive to Trenton to get their citizenship papers.”²⁰ These Italians would generally stay with Achille until they were accustomed to American ways, then go on their own. Although he was not the first, Achille is certainly the first well-documented Italian immigrant in Princeton, and his time at Rockingham became part of the foundation of the Italian-American community.

While the quarries were attracted to men who had been farmers in Italy, many immigrants also found work as gardeners. Former Italian farmers were able to use their knowledge of the land to their advantage in a number of occupations. Back in Southern Italy, many Italians had maintained extensive gardens and farms of “vineyards, olive tree and fig trees, potato and corn fields, goats and sheep.”²¹ Countless were accomplished farmers. “Using traditional methods of cultivation, painstaking labor, and extreme economy, the Italians managed to secure a living on land where Americans could not survive. Alongside with the large flower and vegetable gardens that most Italians maintained at their own homes, many also contributed to the community gardens on Witherspoon Street (now Community Park, an elementary school). “Members of the Princeton community were permitted free use of the land for garden plots and were even provided free seeds.”²² Italians were also employed in landscape trades. Many worked “maintaining the grounds of Princeton University and the large estates and magnificent gardens of wealthy Princetonians... Many landscapers, stonemasons, and stonecutters eventually managed to save enough money to form their own successful businesses as independent contractors.”²³ Many of these contractor businesses can still be seen throughout Princeton and surrounding neighborhoods. By showcasing their abilities as skilled and hardworking craftsmen, Italian immigrants proved their value to the town. While initially regarded with suspicion, and distaste, the Italians came to be valued as steady, sober workers and good neighbors.”²⁴ Along with the word of mouth for job seekers, there was also a campaign to bring Italian immigrants to New Jersey. Ads were placed in newspapers throughout New Jersey, giving Italian-Americans the ability to find positions for family members back with a bit more ease. “Since New Jersey farmers were suffering from a shortage of labor, efforts were made to recruit the Italians as agricultural laborers and tenants.”²⁵ These ads proved useful, as many gained employment, and were able to spread the word to family and friends. Family and friends also knew where to look for work, such as which corners to wait at for companies to come pick up laborers. William Fiabane remembers waiting at the corner of Nassau and Witherspoon Streets, in front of the First National Bank, a place where his aunt, and sponsor, who was a cook in Grover Cleveland’s house, knew that work could be found. A man from the Matthews Construction company came by and shouted, “You

three Italians! You, and you, come with me!"²⁶ Fibane was taken to the University, where he was given a trial to show off his skills in stone masonry. That day he was hired, and continued to work at the University for forty-seven years, as one of Matthews Construction's most prized workers. This was the way that many Italians became successful in Princeton, by word of mouth, and their sponsor securing employment for them.

In the early to mid-twentieth century, an Italian immigrant seeking to come to the United States could not simply get up and leave the country. They had to wait until they were called over by a relative, but not just for any reason. Those who were calling for family and friends back in Italy had to first secure employment and housing for their kin, and set up what was called "sponsorship." "We wanted to leave and come to America after the war, but we had to wait" says Filomena Mazzella, an immigrant from the island of Ischia, who arrived to Princeton in 1953 at the age of 11. "My brothers and father were already in America, but we had to wait until they were ready for us."²⁷ Mazzella's brothers, Raphael and Salvatore Balestrieri, who had been born in the United States, had returned to the States during World War II to complete their service. After the war ended, the brothers decided to return to New Jersey, as there was a growing Italian community in the area of Princeton. Meanwhile, Mazzella's father, Luigi Balestrieri, had also found an immigration sponsor, his brother Salvatore Balestrieri, and was residing in Chester, Pennsylvania. On November 5th, 1952, the day after Dwight Eisenhower was elected President, Mazzella arrived in the United States, and her family was reunited with her father. Upon arriving in New York, Mazzella, along with her mother, sister and brother, with whom she traveled, immediately departed for New Jersey to join her new community.²⁸ This was the case with numerous Italian men and women of the time, and many can remember when their relatives came to the United States after the hardships of war.²⁹

While jobs were abundant in Princeton, they had been hard to come by in Italy, leaving many to seek a new life. Even with the abundance of work in Princeton, a job was still usually found through friends and family. For a newly arrived immigrant, jobs were generally found by their sponsor, and not themselves. "In those days, as is true even now, one heard of a job by word of mouth, from a friend or family member."³⁰ Once employment had been secured by an immigrant's sponsor, housing needed to be found, as any immigrant entering through Ellis Island needed to list a United States home address.³¹ In Mazzella's case, her brothers were renting a house on Henry Avenue, in the heart of the Princeton Italian community, an address that was used on her Ellis Island paperwork. Her father had been able to sponsor her mother, and all his children under the age of 21, as they were considered his dependents and did not need to seek work. In most cases, this is how wives and children of male Italians arrived in the United States, and Princeton.

POW CAMPS AND IMMIGRATION

Another way that many Italians came to the United States during and after World War II was through the many POW camps throughout the country. On the outskirts of Princeton, in Belle Mead, was Camp Belle Mead, or the Belle Mead Depot. Before the war time years of 1941-1945, it had been used as a war aid depot, and many Italians were employed there as laborers, building up and maintaining the site.³² During those four years, the Depot, as it is still referred to, was used as a POW camp.³³ Many Italians were housed at the site, and beginning in February of 1944, 6 months after Italy's surrender to the Allies, they were given the opportunity to volunteer for the Italian Service Unit. Many men who did not volunteer were considered to be Fascist, and records are unclear as to the types of treatment they endured.³⁴ Volunteering for the Italian Service Unit gave the men preferential treatment, and allowed them outside the confines of the camp for certain events, such as public dances, which at the time was considered a generous alternative to release.

Since volunteering for the Italian Service Unit gave POWs more freedoms, many friendships and marriages evolved between these Italians and American women, resulting in war brides. Such is the case of Albrina and Savario Mangone. Albrina herself was the daughter of Italian immigrants, so it was of no surprise that one night at a dance held at Dorothea's House, she met Savario Mangone, a Prisoner of War.

This chance encounter led Albrina to become a war bride, with a unique twist. After the end of the war, Savario returned to Italy, since he did not yet have a sponsor for citizenship in the United States. He brought Albrina, and her mother, with him to Calabria, and the two were married on July 19, 1948. The couple soon returned to Princeton, Albrina's hometown, where she worked as a dress maker and he as a cabinet maker.³⁵ Savario and Albrina were followed several years later by Savario's brothers, whose immigration Savario sponsored. The brothers, Joseph and Antonino Mangone, stayed with Savario and Albrina until they found employment and bought houses of their own in Princeton. Joseph followed his brother as a cabinet maker, while Antonino took a job in the printing room at Princeton University.³⁶

PRINCETON'S ITALIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

As their numbers increased, the Italian community of Princeton grew, and secluded itself to one side of town. In 1908, "New Street was officially renamed Humbert Street after Italy's King Umberto I, the victim of an anarchist assassin in 1900."³⁷ Immigration continued to surge, and "by 1916, the number of Italian laborers was so significant that strike notices posted on the front page of the Princeton Packet on May 6 were printed in both English and Italian."³⁸ With significant numbers of Italians living on Humbert Street, as well as surrounding Baker and Lytle Streets, tight-knit communities sprung up. Markets, bakeries and tailor shops opened on surrounding streets. Social clubs also opened, such as the Marconi League of the Order of the Sons of Italy, Roma Eterna and the Italian-American Sportsmen's Club. The Marconi League, The Sons of Italy and Roma Eterna were modeled after "mutual aid societies, *societa di mutua soccorso*, commonly found in Italy."³⁹ These societies were formed in order to provide assistance to members in need during hardships. Members would pay monthly dues, and then be entitled to benefits if they fell on hard times, and could not pay their bills, or for funerary services if they, or a family member, passed away. The Sportsmen's Club was not for insurance benefits, but founded on the interests of "education, job opportunities, hunting and fishing, and enjoying social activities."⁴⁰ The Sportsmen's Club is the only remaining establishment created by Italian immigrants that is still in operation and supporting the local Italian community, with weekly meetings and events that second and third generation Princeton Italians still attend.⁴¹ This has allowed for the Italian community to continue to thrive, even as immigration has tapered off.

One institution that has remained in service to the Italian community, as well as other lower income families, is Dorothea's House. Dorothea's House, which was created in memory of Dorothea van Dyke McLane, daughter of Princeton University Professor Dr. Henry van Dyke, and wife of New York stockbroker, Guy Richard McLane, is also still in operation. Although not an Italian herself, McLane sympathized with the Italian immigrants of her town, dedicated much of her time to serving them. The mission of Dorothea's House is similar to her mission in life, "To originate, foster, develop, promote, carry on and engage in charitable and benevolent work for the welfare of the inhabitants of Princeton...primarily those of the Italian race."⁴² Many life-long Italian Princetonians can remember going to Dorothea's House in their younger years, for a meal, a bath, or simply for friendship, and to see their neighbors. Positioned nearly half-way between Princeton University and the Italian communities, it was easy to stop off after a long day of building, or drudging lakes, and take advantage of their services. There were also services for women and after school activities for children.⁴³ These services included child care, lessons in English, classes in sewing and housekeeping for young girls, help with housing and employment, and a scholarship awarded to local high school graduates. English lessons were considered extremely important to many in the Italian community, as there are twenty three different dialects of the Italian language.⁴⁴ Finding a common language to not only communicate with each other, but the entire town of Princeton was essential. Community events, such as bands for special occasions and parades for Columbus Day were also organized, bringing the wider community together.⁴⁵ As the community as a whole widened and became more capable, services were redirected to other organizations. "The dispersal of Italian Americans following World War II and the construction Princeton Italian American Sportsman's Club shifted the center of Italian American activities from Dorothea's House, although many Italian American Lodges continued to meet there."⁴⁶ Italian-American events are still occasionally held at Dorothea's House, honoring the rich heritage of the community it helped to thrive.

Another draw of the Princeton area was the already established Roman Catholic community. As religion played a large role in the majority of Italian immigrants, the parish of St. Paul's church welcomed Italians with open arms, as did the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, which had an Italian language service every Sunday afternoon at 4:00pm, starting in May of 1906. The First Presbyterian Church actively sought the membership of Italian immigrants "as a part of a national effort by the Presbyterian Church Board of Home Missions to build up a system of immigrant parishes."⁴⁷ With a local, and national, effort to accept immigrants in to their religious communities, no doubt acceptance in to the wider community was made slightly easier by having a community congregation that already accepted them. This aspect was magnified for the women of the Italian-American community. "In Italy, the women went to church more often than the men. Some men went, but it was mostly us children, and our mothers."⁴⁸ To escape from the mundane home life kept by the general Italian immigrant woman, church was essential. "Women stayed very much at home, raising children, keeping immaculate houses, tending the family vegetable garden."⁴⁹ With hard work being a foundation of the Italian life, Sunday as the day of rest, was extremely important. This was the day reserved for family, which meant morning church services, and Sunday suppers to which all family members attended.

CUISINE

Cuisine was an important part of the Italian way of life, and the tradition of family meals after church followed from Italy to Princeton. After Sunday mass, women usually spent the rest of the day preparing large meals. The contents of these meals depended largely on where in Italy an immigrant hailed from. Northerners tended to eat lighter meals consisting of chicken broth and cornmeal, while Southerners consumed heavier foods, generally made with more spices. In 1975, one of the town's newspapers, the Princeton Recollector ran an article that detailed the types of foods that area Italian-Americans consumed:

The Northern Italians usually have a lot of chicken broth, cornmeal mush topped with a small amount of tomato sauce, but preferably flavored with "humido" – oil flavored with garlic and meat juices. Rice is also standard...and "coppellettis" – that is little pillows stuffed with bread crumbs, cheese, meat or whatever, and cooked in chicken broth. Southerners, on the other hand, have raviolis – that is stuffed dough, but with a heavy tomato sauce over it. Northerners have "pasta" but with just a tablespoon of sauce in the center, and butter and parmesan cheese on the spaghetti; the Southerners have heavy tomato-spiced sauce on pasta. Much veal is used in Italian cooking. Southerners, especially around Naples, have a lot of fish, even in spaghetti sauce, and clam sauce and broth. Their wine is heavier and food spiced.⁵⁰

These differences in regional cuisines began to meld together as Italians assimilated in to the American ways of life. As noted by the same article, "Among Italian-Americans today, most of the old-timers make their own dough for spaghetti and have gardens for the vegetables. But most of the modern generation, I believe, eats "American Style."⁵¹ The article further states that many modern Italians did not learn how to cook the traditional foods from their parents and grandparents, and are beginning to regret losing that part of their heritage.

SEGREGATION, ETHNICITY, AND RACE IN PRINCETON

Part of the reason for many Italians not learning the inner-workings of their heritage is because much like other immigrant groups before them, such as the Irish and Germans, the Italians were not always welcome in Princeton. Before Italian immigrants proved their worth to their fellow townspeople, they had been the unwanted fixtures of the community, and were pushed to the far side of town. "Americans regarded them as dirty, undersized foreigners, who trundle hand organs, tend fruit stands, sweep the streets, or work in mines, in tunnels, on railroads, or in construction work."⁵² This made it difficult to assimilate in to the culture of the town, so many immigrants made their own. By the 1950s, the Italian-American and African-American communities of Princeton had joined together, and become integrated around the far end of Witherspoon Street.⁵³ The town of Princeton had long been segregated, with the

lower end of Witherspoon Street becoming home to a large African American community. According to a town newspaper, the Princeton Herald, schools in this area were exclusively for "the town's colored children."⁵⁴ As the Italian population grew, these two communities became intertwined. "The African American community was very welcoming to others who were unwanted."⁵⁵ Even though their communities lived together harmoniously, Italians, considered by the town of Princeton to be white, generally sent their children up town to the Nassau School, or to the St. Paul's School at St. Paul's Church. In 1948, Princeton "reorganized" the school district, to "end the exclusive use of the Witherspoon School by the town's colored children."⁵⁶ When this occurred, the two communities became closer than ever, with students from all public town schools attending the desegregated Princeton High School. As students became integrated, friendships between the African American and Italian American children were forged. Richard Mazzella, who was born and raised on Lytle Street, well within the integrated Italian-American and African-American community remember that "some of my best friends were black. They were nicer to us than anyone else in that town."⁵⁷ This sentiment is shared by many other Italian Americans, as stated by the son of one immigrant, "We went to school but did not socialize with 'Princeton' children. We were never invited to their parties or to their houses." Another follows this sentiment by stating, "You knew which girls you would be permitted to date and those in whose homes you would not be welcomed."⁵⁸ Assimilation in to the wider community was not often a speedy process, leaving many Italians to stay within their own smaller communities until they found successes of their own.

ASSIMILATION, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND THE SISTER CITY OF PETTORANELLO

On the other hand, some immigrants did feel embraced by the wider community of Princeton. As noted by the Historical Society of Princeton, one immigrant, "Filomena (Fannie) Freda, who attended public school through high school, counted many of the daughters of Princeton Professors as her friends including University President Woodrow Wilson's daughter."⁵⁹ While this may be attributed to pure luck, and not the common experience among the town's new Italian community, the assimilation process did indeed happen for all immigrants, no matter how gradual. Many made friends outside of the Italian and African-American communities, including Achille Carnevale, who befriended the Princeton Borough engineer, as well as several Princeton Professors, including Professor Loomis and Professor Kemmerer.⁶⁰ Although William Fiabane is not known to have befriended any Princeton Professors, he did achieve community-wide respect as one of the most skilled and knowledgeable stonemasons in the area, which gave him recognition outside of the Italian-American community.⁶¹

The big triumphs of a few also led to success of the broader Italian-American community. As the Italian community assimilated in to the wider community of Princeton, many immigrants, and first-generation Italian Americans became quite successful. Over time, as many immigrant groups before them, the Italian community became less of an unwanted fixtures and more of valued, respected members. In the town paper, the Princeton Recollector, an article published in Autumn of 1983 notates how successful many Italian Americans became. "Men became accustomed to American life and the language...Now these Italians have children and grandchildren who have been educated here in Princeton, gone to college and in most cases become quite prosperous."⁶² As numbers of first and second-generation Italian Americans grew, so did the amount of success stories, which no doubt became a factor in drawing over even more immigrants. Ischian immigrant Filomena Mazzella remembers the mindset both she and her family carried. "We believed that this was the land of opportunity, and that Princeton had more than we ever could have in Ischia. After I came, my sisters followed, because we told them how well we were doing."⁶³ These first and second-generation Italians also gained from the education they received in America, especially in Princeton. Vecoli notes that "both the native born and those who had emigrated as children had the advantage of an American education which opened them to a wider range of occupational opportunities."⁶⁴ In Princeton, these occupational opportunities included opening businesses to service the town. As mentioned before, many landscapers, stonemasons and stonecutters were able to become successful independent contractors. Many other immigrants and Italian-Americans were able to establish other businesses, such as bakeries, restaurants and tailors. The first Italian bakery in Princeton was Zazzali's Bakery on Vandeventer Street in 1895. An Italian Market, Toto's, opened on

Witherspoon Street in 1912, and followed by Caruso's Tailor Shop in 1917. Many more businesses followed, all which were all family owned and operated. Most Italian-owned businesses expected children to help out after school, instilling the value of hard work, as would have been done in Italy.⁶⁵

While the accomplishments of individual Italian-Americans are many, one notable accomplishment by the Italian American community as a whole was the town of Princeton being named the Sister City of Pettoranello di Molise.⁶⁶ Pettoranello, a small city in central Italy, near Naples, partnered with its former residents, and the town of Princeton, in a cultural exchange. A foundation was formed, aiming at preserving the heritage of Princeton's Italians. The foundation's goal states that "The Princeton/Pettoranello Foundation is a non-profit, sister city organization founded in recognition of the contributions of Americans of Italian descent to the quality of life in Princeton, New Jersey; to act as a community service organization dedicated to providing community services; to creating cultural exchanges for educational and better societal understanding; to perpetuate the heritage and common bond between the Italian village of Pettoranello (where many Italian-American residents of the Princeton area are from) and the Princeton community."⁶⁷ This foundation's existence is proof of the importance of the Italian American in the town of Princeton, and how valuable they became. The 1994 exhibit on the Italian American at the Historical Society of Princeton makes a point to say that "Since their arrival in Princeton over 100 years ago, Italian Americans have worked with enduring vitality to overcome the difficulties faced by so many of America's new immigrants...Today, the Italian-American community continues to be an integral part of the social, economic, and cultural framework of Princeton, infusing it with warmth and enthusiastic life."⁶⁸

The value of the Italian-American community is further echoed by a letter to the editor of one of Princeton's newspapers, *Town Topics*, in 2014. A former resident wrote in to question "if many Princetonians today, especially those new to the area, are aware of the huge contribution and legacy that some of the first Italians who came to Princeton left for us to appreciate."⁶⁹ This reader also goes on to suggest that if you know an Italian family, inquire about their story, about how their grandfather made his way here, and how they kept together in a strange land, and still maintain parts of their heritage. This inquiry is important in keeping the accounts of these people, who are often overlooked in Princeton's history.

PRINCETON'S ITALIAN HERITAGE TODAY

This research has laid out how newly arrived Italian immigrants, and subsequent generation of Italian Americans, adapted their lives to acclimate in to the town of Princeton. Their tight-knit community, although now decreased in size, left a lasting impression on the town, with impacts that can still be seen. Italian bakeries, restaurants, landscapers and stonemasons can still be readily found in Princeton, many of which are owned by first generation Italian-Americans, and are sought after by those seeking high quality works. Although one cannot find the Italian population Humbert Street once boasted, a walk through town reveals many Italian-owned businesses, such as D'Angelo's Market near Humbert Street on Spring Street. Instead of English lessons, Italian lessons are now offered at Dorothea's house, showcasing the desire of first and second-generation Italian-Americans to regain the culture of their parents and grandparents that they now regret losing, as well as an interest in from the community in the culture that influenced so much of the town. Italian festivals are still held occasionally at Dorothea's House, and by the Pettoranello Princeton Sister City Foundation, as well as the county-wide Italian Festival held yearly by Mercer County. These are just a sample of the Italian-American events of Princeton, New Jersey, but they are important factors in showing how the Italian community took charge and forged its own path through the town, and left a lasting impression. One that only shows signs of further influence and growth as Princeton continues to evolve.

Appendix 1

Map of Italian Dialects.

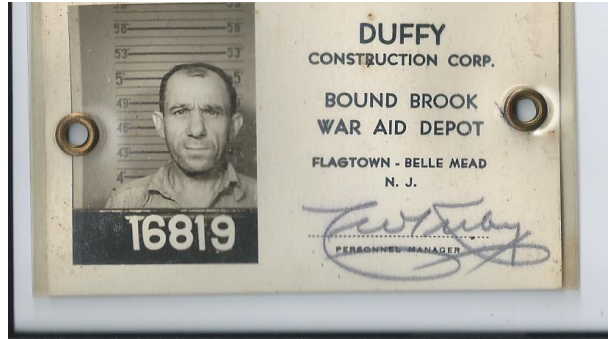
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/32/Dialetti_e_lingue_in_Italia.ng



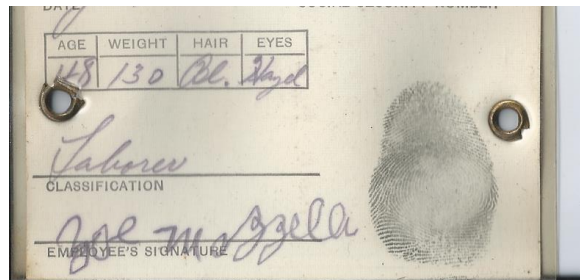
Appendix 3

Image of employment card of Guiseppe Mazzella for Duffy Construction Group, Bound Brook War Aid Depot, Flagtown-Belle Mead New Jersey. Image used with permission from Richard Mazzella, son of Guiseppe Mazzella.

Front of Card



Back of Card



J. FRASCELLA: ITALIAN IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN PRINCETON, N.J.

Appendix 4

Image of record of Ellis Island Arrival for Filomena Mazzella (nee Balestrieri), along with her mother Cataldina, sister Carmela Mangone (nee Balestrieri) and brother Giovanni "John" Balestrieri. The address notated on the Ellis Island Papers says "Harry Avenue," although the Balestrieris moved to Henry Avenue off of Witherspoon Street to be with Filomena's brother, Raphael Balestrieri.

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
(Rev. 1-3-49)

Form approved.
Budget Bureau No. 43-R019-3.

MANIFEST No. 44

MANIFEST OF IN-BOUND PASSENGERS (ALIENS)

Class TOURIST CL. from NAPLES, ITALY. 27 OCTOBER, 19 52
(Port of embarkation) (Date)

on SS. INDEPENDENCE arriving at port of NEW YORK, N.Y. NOVEMBER 5, 19 52
(Name of vessel) (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

LINE No.	FAMILY NAME-GIVEN NAME Destination in United States	AGE (Years)	SEX (F-M)	MAR- RIED OR SINGLE	TRAVEL DOC. No. NATIONALITY	NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION OF TICKETS OF BAGGAGE	HEAD TAX COL- LECTED	THIS COLUMN FOR USE OF MASTER, SURGEON, AND U. S. OFFICERS
1	AVVAMPATO, Giuseppa 115 W. 2nd St., Greenburg, Pa.	81	D	S	I-1807823 Italian	1	Yes	6060796
2	BAGNATO, Vittoria Rd # 2, Kenneth Square, Pa.	17	F	M	I-1014454 Italian	2	Yes	6060797
3	BALESTRIERI, Cataldina 31 Harry Av. Princeton, N.J.	54	F	M	I-1316255 Italian	8	Yes	6060798
4	BALESTRIERI, Carmela 31 Harry Av. Princeton, N.J.	19	F	S	I-403981 Italian	"	Yes	" 150
5	BALESTRIERI, Giovanni 31 Harry St. Princeton, N.J.	14	M	S	I-403983 Italian	"	No	" EXEMPT
6	BALESTRIERI, Filomena 31 Harry St. Princeton, N.J.	10	F	S	I-403982 Italian	"	No	" EXEMPT
7	BALZANO, Cristoforo 135 Hamilton Av., Brooklyn, N.Y.	23	M	S	RP-A-6875611 Italian	2	Yes	6060799

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- ¹ See Appendix 1. The Italian Language has 23 dialects. Immigrants from the area of Rome generally spoke what is considered “true” Italian, or the language without a dialect. Other immigrants spoke a variety of dialects, but those interviewed for this research spoke the Napolitano dialetti, or dialect, and the Piemontese torinese-cunese dialetti.
- ² “The Italian People of New Jersey.” In *The New Jersey Ethnic Experience*, edited by Barbara Cunningham, by Ruldolph J. Vecoli. Union City, N.J.: W.H. Wise, 1977.
- ³ “The Italian People of New Jersey.” In *The New Jersey Ethnic Experience*, edited by Barbara Cunningham, by Ruldolph J. Vecoli. Union City, N.J.: W.H. Wise, 1977.
- ⁴ “*Building a Community: Italian Americans of Princeton.*” Bainbridge House, The Historical Society of Princeton, New Jersey. 158 Nassau Street Princeton, NJ 08542. September 23, 2015.
- ⁵ “*Building a Community: Italian Americans of Princeton.*”. Historical Society of Princeton, New Jersey. Bainbridge House 158 Nassau Street Princeton, New Jersey 08542. September 12, 1993-June 12, 1994.
- ⁶ Magone, Carmela. Personal interview by author, September 20, 2015.
- ⁷ “*The Italian People of New Jersey.*” In *The New Jersey Ethnic Experience*, edited by Barbara Cunningham, by Ruldolph J. Vecoli. Union City, N.J.: W.H. Wise, 1977.
- ⁸ “*Building a Community: Italian Americans of Princeton.*” Bainbridge House, The Historical Society of Princeton, New Jersey. 158 Nassau Street Princeton, NJ 08542. September 23, 2015..”
- ⁹ Balistriere, Marianna. Personal interview by author. August 19, 2015.
- ¹⁰ Appendix 2. Copy of Employment Registration card of Salvatore Balestrieri, employed at a laborer with Matthews Construction.
- ¹¹ Appendix 2.
- ¹² “*Building a Community: Italian Americans of Princeton.*” Bainbridge House, The Historical Society of Princeton, New Jersey. 158 Nassau Street Princeton, NJ 08542. September 23, 2015.
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- ¹⁴ *The Princeton Recollector*. “Princeton Fifty Years Ago.” Connie Sayen. July 1975. 1.
- ¹⁵ “*Building a Community: Italian Americans of Princeton.*” Bainbridge House, The Historical Society of Princeton, New Jersey. 158 Nassau Street Princeton, NJ 08542. September 23, 2015.
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- ¹⁸ *The Princeton Recollector*. “Quarrymen Kept Candle Burning in General’s Study.” Autumn 1983. 21.
- ¹⁹ *The Princeton Recollector*. “Quarrymen Kept Candle Burning in General’s Study.” Autumn 1983. 21.
- ²⁰ *The Princeton Recollector*. “Achille Carnevale Brought Italians to Town.” October, 1975. 12.
- ²¹ *The Princeton Recollector*. “*Lake Quarry Work Attracted Italians.*” July 1975. 4.
- ²² “*Building a Community: Italian Americans of Princeton.*” Bainbridge House, The Historical Society of Princeton, New Jersey. 158 Nassau Street Princeton, NJ 08542. September 23, 2015.
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- ²⁴ Vecoli, Rudolph J. *The People of New Jersey*. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1965. 217-218.
- ²⁵ Vecoli, Rudolph J. *The People of New Jersey*. Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1965. 217.
- ²⁶ *The Princeton Recollector*. “*Stonemason Found Promise of America in Princeton.*”. September 1979. 15
- ²⁷ Mazzella, Filomena. Personal interview by author, September 15, 2015.
- ²⁸ Mazzella, Filomena. Personal interview by author. November 6, 2015. Mazzella remember confetti being thrown on the ship the day before her arrival at Ellis Island in celebration of the election of Eisenhower.
- ²⁹ Pinelli, Eleanor. Telephone interview by author. July 28, 2015.
- ³⁰ *The Princeton Recollector*. “*Princeton Fifty Years Ago.*” July 1975. 4.
- ³¹ Appendix 4, image of Ellis Island record for Filomena Mazzella (nee Balestrieri).
- ³² Appendix 3, image of employment card from Duffy Construction, War Aid Depot.
- ³³ Belle Mead Depot still exists in what is now Hillsborough. The site unfortunately was mostly destroyed by a devastating fire in early 2016.
- ³⁴ Kirkpatrick, Kathy. “Italian Service Units.” In *Prisoner of War Camps Across America*. GlenTracer, 2012.

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- ³⁵ Suski-Harding, Bernadette. "Celebrating a Century." CentralJersey.com. February 26, 2014. Accessed December 6, 2015. http://www.centraljersey.com/packet_magazine/celebrating-a-century/article_ea71160b-73ac-5dec-95b3-0432be74584a.html.
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- ⁵⁴ Princeton Herald. September, 1948.
- ⁵⁵ *I Grew Up in Princeton*. Directed by Brad Mays. New Jersey: Lightsong Films, 2013. DVD. Although not officially interviewed, author spent over an hour on the phone with director, discussing the film and the director's personal experiences in the town of Princeton in the seventies.
- ⁵⁶ Vicki Hyman. "When Princeton Attacked Jim Crow." http://blog.nj.com/ledgerarchives/2008/02/when_princeton_attacked_jim_cr.html. February 8, 2008. Accessed October 29, 2015.
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- ⁶⁶ Throughout this research, Pettoranello is seen being referred to as both Petronello and Pettoranello in sources. The official name is Pettoranello di Molise, but both spellings and pronunciations appear to be used interchangeably.
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