

American Italian Historical Association

WESTERN REGIONAL CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

A people without a past is a people without a future

Bolinas, California

www.aiha-wrc.org

Fall 2010

President's Message

As my presidential term comes to an end, I want to tell you what an honor it has been to lead in the effort to preserve and celebrate our tremendous culture. I have enjoyed meeting and talking with many of you at our events and programs, via email and even on Facebook. I extend special gratitude to Deanna Denurra, our volunteer coordinator, who answered my every call and came through for us on every occasion.

Last year I was fortunate to experience my first sabbatical, and part of my work involved the California Italian American Project (www.aiha-wrc.org/CIAP/index.html). I added portraits of the towns of San Jose and Stockton to the Project, and was fortunate enough to interview Dr. Robert Benedetti, Ken Borelli, Michael Calosso, Wilman and Torella Iacomini with their daughter Anna Iacomini Bernardi, and Ralph Lucchetti. Food and drink accompanied each of the interviews where I feasted on frittata and pasta, sipped cappuccino, and drank delicious homemade vino while we talked story. What appears on the web simply begins the Italian American story in both cities. It is a rich history, and I hope at some point in time to be able to add more voices, images and text. I am also indebted to our web goddess, Jennifer Lagier Fellguth, who worked her magic with everything I sent her for the Project.

Benvenuti to new members: JoAnn Ghiggeri Bjornsted & Roger Bjornsted, Tina Galzignato, Anthony Iantosca, Cecilia Logan, Nora Monette, Madalyn Frazzini Perrine, Richard Stewart, and Nickolas Mirinelli with the Italian Cemetery in Colma. Currently we are 153 members strong and for that I am grateful to the indefatigable Richard Vannucci.

If you have not yet had the chance to renew your 2011 membership, please take a few moments to do so at this time (see the membership renewal form on the back page of this newsletter). Your membership is important to us and allows us to offer our programs free of charge. You are invited to join us on Facebook: American Italian Historical Association-Western Regional Chapter (AIHA-WRC), where we currently have 145 friends.

Anyone who receives this newsletter by post and is willing to receive subsequent ones electronically, please email Lawrence DiStasi at lwdistasi@sbcglobal.net.

Interested volunteers, please feel free to call me at home (925) 833-9194 or at work (925) 424-1287.

Buone feste.

Ciao e a presto

-Teri Ann Bengiveno

Upcoming

Two American Women of the Risorgimento

Anita Garibaldi Margaret Fuller

Date: Sunday, March 6, 2011

Time: 2:30 PM

Place: Museo Italo Americano—Bldg. C, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123

In connection with the Italy@150 celebration of the 150th anniversary of Italian Unification, authors Dorothy Bryant and Lawrence DiStasi will focus on two American women who took part in the events that shook Rome in 1849, when a Republic was declared. Anita Garibaldi, a native of Brazil, insisted on joining her husband, the great Giuseppe Garibaldi, as he tried to defend Rome from an assault by French forces. Margaret Fuller, a native of Boston and founding editor of the Transcendentalist journal, the *Dial*, had come to Rome on her first European tour, fulfilling a lifelong dream. As a foreign correspondent for the *NY Tribune*, she sent a series of riveting dispatches describing the events of 1849. They were, in brief:

On February 9, 1849, Rome's new Constituent Assembly proclaimed a Republic for the first time in nearly 2,000 years. A month later, Giuseppe Mazzini became one of its leaders. These were epochal days in Rome, but the departed pope, Pius IX, declared the republic illegal, and called on France to restore his rule. Mazzini tapped Giuseppe Garibaldi, recently returned to Italy from his South American exile—where he had met and married Anita—to defend the city. The odds were impossible: the French had assembled 40,000 troops, with advanced cannon and other weapons, while Garibaldi led a ragtag army of citizens and redshirts. Still, he fought off the French until the end of June, when he admitted defeat, and, accompanied by about 4,000 loyalists and his pregnant wife on horseback, fled north. Though Garibaldi eventually managed to escape to America, Anita did not: weak and pregnant, she contracted malaria and perished near Mandriole.

Margaret Fuller, placed in charge of the Fate Bene Fratelli hospital caring for the wounded, determined to stay as long as she could to write her dispatches. They are among the most inspiring descriptions we have of the defense of Rome, and earned her a Roman street named in her honor. Like Anita, she died shortly after leaving Italy with her Italian husband and 2-year-old son, when their ship ran aground off Fire Island, NY.

Narrating the story of Anita Garibaldi will be noted author Dorothy Bryant, whose novel, *Anita, Anita: Garibaldi of the New World*, was published in 1993. WRC Newsletter editor

Lawrence DiStasi will narrate the life of Margaret Fuller Ossoli and read from her dispatches.

The program is jointly sponsored by the WRC and the Museo Italo Americano. For more information, call the Museo at (415) 673-2200, or Lawrence DiStasi at (415)868-0538.

The 3rd Annual Las Positas Italian Film Festival

Date: Friday March 25 & Saturday March 26, 2011

Place: Las Positas College, 3000 Campus Hill Dr. Livermore, California 94551

In connection with the Italy@150 celebration, the third annual Las Positas Italian Film Festival will be dedicated to the theme of the Italian Risorgimento. Further announcements regarding films, times and places will be forthcoming.

The event is co-sponsored by the LPC Foreign Language Department, and the AIHA/WRC. For further information, contact Catherine Suarez at (925) 424-1212 or Teri Ann Bengiveno at (925) 424-1287.

Una Storia Segreta

It has been 15 years since the *Una Storia Segreta* exhibit was displayed in San Jose, sponsored by the Italian American Heritage Foundation. On Sunday April 10, 2011, 2 PM, at the IAHF in San Jose, the story will be reintroduced with an Open Forum designed to address and discuss the issues involved in the wartime restrictions, especially in California. Tony Zerbo will chair the Forum, with Chet Campanella—who persuaded Senator Simitian to introduce a new Senate Resolution memorializing these events last spring—as the inspirational force. *Una Storia Segreta* Project Director Lawrence DiStasi will review the major events of the wartime story to open the program. Notables like Senator Simitian, Congressman Mike Honda, and Leon Panetta are being invited to attend, along with many who suffered internment, detention, or evacuation from prohibited zones. Audience members will be invited to comment and/or share their own experiences or those of their families. For more information, contact Lawrence DiStasi at (415) 868-0538, lwdistasi@sbcglobal.net.

Italy@150

The series of events celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Italian Unification (Italy did not become a Republic until June of 1946) have been taking shape—see above. The first event, *Garibaldi@Garibaldi's*, on November 28, 2010, was a dinner at Garibaldi's Restaurant in San Francisco. Red scarves in honor of Garibaldi's traditional garb were handed out. Most other events are scheduled for March and April of 2011. Among the scheduled events will be: On March 17, a "Happy Birthday, Italy" event to feature a concert of Risorgimento songs followed by a masked ball, location to be announced; *150 Years and the Italian Public Libraries*, an exhibit featuring objects belonging to Garibaldi, at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (IIC), opening March 23; another exhibit, *Portrait of a Nation: Italy during the Risorgimento*, to include documents illustrating the response of California's Italian community to unification, in April at the IIC; a conference,

April 1&2 at San Francisco State, featuring scholars Nancy Carnevale, Simone Cinotto, Fulvio Orsitto and Arnold Schmidt; a conference, with a concert to follow, on the role of classic and popular music during the Risorgimento, March 31 at IIC; and a conference on Princess Cristina Belgioioso, in May at IIC. *Il Gattopardo (The Leopard)* will be featured at the San Francisco International Film Festival, April 21 thru May 5. For information, contact the IIC, (415) 788-7142.

Member Activities

Lusia del Giudice has been a mountain of activity in the recent spate of events honoring Sabato Rodia's Watts Towers. The project director of *The Watts Towers Common Ground Initiative: Art, Migrations, Development* (Oct. 18 thru Dec. 10), she has put together a range of public events in L.A. including: an international conference at UCLA and Watts, two art exhibits ("Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts" at UCLA Special Collections, and "Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts," at Watts Towers Arts Center), and film, theater, and music events. Speaking at the 3-day conference were WRC members Kenneth Scambray, Univ of La Verne: "California and the Italian Immigrant Experience: the Artistic and Literary Contexts of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers"; and VP Laura Ruberto: "A California Detour on the Road to Italy: The Hubcap Ranch, the Napa Valley, and Italian American Identity." Old Sam Rodia would be proud.

Rick Malaspina has completed a book, *Italian Oakland*, to be published by Arcadia Publishing in February 2011. The book is part of Arcadia's *Images of America* series on local history. Information can be found at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

Kenneth Scambray has been wandering far afield researching materials for his upcoming book on Italian immigrants in the West. He will be giving a lecture, "Italian Immigration in the West: 1890-1940," for a faculty lecture series at the University of LaVerne (where he is a professor), on December 6.

Lawrence DiStasi's article on "Derived Aliens: Derivative Citizenship and Italian American Women during World War II," will appear in the Winter issue of *Italian Americana*. The essay discusses the American women who lost their citizenship upon marrying Italian immigrants, and were classified as "enemy aliens" thereby.

Teri Ann Bengiveno has co-edited with John Paul Russo *Italian Passages: Making and Thinking History*, Vol. 40 in the AIHA's annual Conference Proceedings, out this year.

Jennifer Guglielmo's October 12 talk at St. Mary's College about her new book, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945*, was a great success, bringing together students and scholars from women's studies, political science, sociology, and Italian. Special thanks to Maria Grazia De Angelis of Saint Mary's for working with Laura Ruberto on this project.

Ballot for AIHA/WRC Officers, 2010

The following are the candidates nominated for WRC office, members in good standing of the WRC and AIHA National (write-in candidates must also be members of the WRC and AIHA National). Voters in this election must be paid-up members of the WRC. To vote, send in this ballot page (print page 3 if you receive the newsletter by email), checking the box to indicate that you are a WRC member in good standing, to:

AIHA/WRC Elections, 1240 Waverly Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301.

If you wish to vote and have not yet sent in your 2010 dues, you may do both by sending your dues to the same address along with your ballot: (Individual: \$20; Family: \$25; Organizations: \$30.)

Please return completed ballot by December 15, 2010.

President

Laura E. Ruberto. Having received her Ph.D. from the Department of Literature at UC San Diego, Laura Ruberto is currently Humanities Professor and Co-Chair of the Department of Arts & Cultural Studies at Berkeley City College. She is the author of *Gramsci, Migration, and the Representation of Women's Work*, and the co-editor of *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*. She keeps a blog, "Raccogli e Passa," at i-Italy.org. She has been a member of the AIHA since 1998, and an officer of the WRC since 2003.

Write-in candidate _____

Vice-President

Richard Dunbar. Born in Petaluma CA, with maternal grandparents from Lucca, Richard Dunbar traveled to Florence in 1981 to study Italian, and ended up remaining there until 2001. In Florence he worked for UNICEF as an editor, translator, and writer; when he returned to the U.S., he followed up his studies with an MA in Italian from San Francisco State. Dunbar currently teaches Italian at both Las Positas College in Livermore and St. Mary's College in Moraga. He is a co-organizer of the Las Positas College Film Festival.

Write-in Candidate _____

Secretary/Treasurer

Teri Ann Bengiveno. Currently a History Professor at Las Positas College in Livermore, Teri Ann Bengiveno received her BA and MA from San Jose State University and her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She taught at San Jose State for eight years, and is active in a number of local and national Italian American organizations. She is co-organizer of the Las Positas College Film Festival, and has served as WRC President for the past four years.

Write-in candidate _____

Curator

Lawrence DiStasi. Lawrence DiStasi has served as President and Newsletter Editor of the AIHA/WRC. He is project director of the exhibit, *Una Storia Segreta: When Italian Americans Were 'Enemy Aliens,'* and co-chair of CIAP, the web-based California Italian American Project.

Write-in candidate _____

Vote for one (1) candidate for each office. Send this ballot by **December 15, 2010** to:

AIHA/WRC Elections, 1240 Waverly Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301.

Check Here if Paid-Up Member of the WRC _____.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT: BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AIHA/WRC....TODAY!

Send dues (Individual: \$20; Family: \$25; Organizations: \$30)

to: AIHA/WRC Treasurer
5072 Elrod Dr.
Castro Valley, CA 94546

From:

(name)

(address)

(city, state)

(phone)

(email address)

(volunteer skills—events, computers, mailings, etc.)

Send AIHA National Dues (Individual:
\$40; Student: \$20; Senior: \$25) to:

JOHN D. CALANDRA INSTITUTE
25 W. 43rd St. – 17th Floor
New York, NY 10036

(NB: Please DO NOT send National dues
to us. Send only to the above address.)

Members with items for the next
newsletter should send them to:

Lawrence DiStasi
P.O. Box 533
Bolinas, CA 94924
email: lwdistasi@sbcglobal.net

The American Italian Historical Association

Western Regional Chapter

P.O. Box 533
Bolinas, CA 94924