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The Civic Life Of Abruzzo Transferred To Philadelphia: The Italian-American Voluntary Association, 1890-1924

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The American ethnic association rose and thrived during the era of emigration and settlement, peak years of late nineteenth-century industrialism and urbanization in America's cities. One set of actors in this drama were the rural emigrants of Abruzzo in central and southern Italy. This was a people that might be expected to be traumatized by the urgency of departure and the enigma of arrival and settlement. At the same time, however, the Abruzzesse had acquired a level of social capital long established by the experience of life-sustaining seasonal migration within Italy and Europe and an awareness and knowledge of the ethic of communal civic action through the legacy of the many charitable associations and societies of mutual support. The traditional social and economic structure of rural, mountainous Abruzzo collapsed in the wake of Italian unification and nascent modernization in the later half of the nineteenth century, but the lessons of communal associations did not and, in fact, were carried to Philadelphia and reborn in the proliferation of ethnic voluntary associations that sprang up in the Italian-American enclave in the late 1800s and the first decades of the twentieth century.

The story of the voluntary associations the Italians initiated in South Philadelphia begins northeast of Rome, in the region of Abruzzo, with the full-scale exodus of an impoverished peasantry and rural proletariat from mountain redoubts in the towering peaks of the Apennines, extending through the foothills to the more gentle rolling coastal hills and plains along the Adriatic. The hardscrabble nature of agricultural existence at these

altitudes, coupled with a long history of seasonal migration within Italy and Central Europe, prepared the Abruzzesse for the next massive step, migration across the Atlantic. In fact, migration among the rural workers of Abruzzo was "an ancient tradition of mobility" that sustained families and homes by providing supplemental income.[1]

One of the images and realities of the Southern Italian emigrating underclass during the mass exodus of the late nineteenth century was impoverishment, a perceived deprivation that extended to cultural and political practices. Yet, as Philadelphia became a location of chain migration from Abruzzo, the Italians of Abruzzo quickly established a mutual aid society, *La Societa Unione Abruzzese*, in 1893, which offered health and death benefits to its members as well as a place of identity and social gathering. A voluntary association can be conceived of as a form of social exclusion, closure around a set of social markers that define the specific group. Many other Italian societies based on a number of social sites, work, home village in Italy and social class soon joined the initial efforts established by the Abruzzesse of Philadelphia.

The Italian ethnic society, democratically run with a high regard for parliamentary procedure and open financial records, was a direct borrowing from small-town beneficial societies of long tradition in Abruzzo. The rise of Italian-American civic life in Philadelphia began in Abruzzo, in small towns such as Atri, Ancarano, Bellante, Castelli, Spoltore and Teramo with workers' mutual aid associations, local nursery and day care centers established by town and agricultural workers struggling to eke out an existence in the declining economic climate of the late nineteenth century.

The Social Meaning of Voluntary Associations in Industrialized Settings

The voluntary association has a rich history and meaning in America, derived in part from De Tocqueville's lauding of grass roots democracy through the many small-town societies and associations he observed on his tour of America's early republic. The Anglo-American association as the ideal model resonates with our appreciation of early democracy in small-town Protestant America. Robert Putnam in his writings has made much of the linkage of American voluntary associations and the construction and maintenance of civic institutions in America.

Putnam's ideal type of voluntary association is a combination of "norms, networks, trust"[2] that is activated when individuals join formal groups. The voluntary association, when further connected through "bridging" with established associations and other social networks, is thought to have earned "social capital" and a higher level of influence and stability as it joins the mainstream of civic action. The ethnic association also performed an educational function similar to Putnam's classic

description of social capital, a building of norms and expectations of communal awareness and responsibility within the individual as Coleman states, "the norm that one should forego self-interest and act in the interests of the collectivity."[3]

In Putnam's scheme, the accumulation and expenditure of social capital in America had a regional explanation tied to assumptions about urbanization and social development. Voluntary associations were assumed to have thrived mostly in the Northeastern cities where the stock of established American influence on association building was augmented by the influx of ethnic minorities who strove to construct similar associations in the urban immigrant neighborhoods.

This stock assumption of Northeastern urban leadership in the explosion of associationalism in late 19th-century America was tested by Robert Putnam and Gerald Gamm in their study, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940." The urban mass gathering momentum in the late 19th century had certain communal traditions from either small-town America or the European village that were transformed under the influence and early practicing models of established American associations, turning the accelerating urban landscape of the 1890s into a maze of new and old societies. Thus, the statement "virtually all scholars agree that the growth of associations in the period 1870 to 1920 was due to the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration on traditional communal attachments" became a model to be tested and validated.[4]

The empirical universe of the Putnam & Gamm study was broad and inclusive, tapping into every type of voluntary association—ethnic mutual aid societies, church, work, fraternal, sport and cultural societies, excluding associations sponsored by government agencies or corporations. Results revealed that the Midwest and even the sparsely populated West were more ideal locations for the growth of De Tocqueville's localized democracy. "Unlike that in the West and Midwest, associational activity in the Northeast dampened, rather than flowered, during the era of intense industrialization, urbanization, and mass immigration."[5] Thus, the conclusion was put forward that "cities, even great industrial cities teeming with immigrants, were not the initiators and propellants of American civil society. Voluntary associations were more apt to flourish in small cities and towns than in large metropolises."[6]

One possible explanation for this new finding and reversal of accepted wisdom on American associations might have been an undercounting of Northeastern urban ethnic associations; this was a problem considered and rejected by the study's authors. Instead, ethnic and religious orientation accounted for a disadvantage in the creation of American civic life—"It is possible...that the vertical, hierarchical structure of Catholicism, in contrast with the congregational structure of Protestantism and Judaism,

might have made it relatively difficult for Catholics to acquire the skills and habits necessary to form other associations."[7] Elevating the Anglo-American Protestant association as the primary model represents a failure in understanding of how truly expansive the urban world of ethnic associations was in Northeastern American cities like Philadelphia, a vast network of civic energy dominated by Catholic Irish and Italians in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

If we consult the City Directories of Philadelphia for the year 1900, we see that the Philadelphia Directory fails to list almost all of the regionally inspired Italian-American associations in Philadelphia.[8]   The Abruzzo Union, the city's first (1893) and largest Italian-American association was not listed nor was the populous mutual aid society of barbers, *La Societa Barbieri Italiani Stella d'Italia*. The Italian Stone Masons Club of Philadelphia was established in 1886, and it, too, was not mentioned.[9]

Italian voluntary associations in Philadelphia were often named after the patron saints of their home villages; this movement was called *campanilliismo* or the ringing of the town bell which signified village allegiance in Southern Italy.   Italian ethnic associations in Philadelphia would organize around these old-world symbols and reflect a network of meaning derived from villages, towns, cities and even whole regions such as Abruzzo and other provinces of Southern Italy.   Ellsworth Street, in South Philadelphia, still had eight such village-inspired societies in 1940, all on the same street within blocks of each other—the Aprutium Mutual Support Society, 1236 Ellsworth; *La Societa San Antonio di Padova*, 2132 Ellsworth; *La Societa della Madonna della Carmine*, 1328 Ellsworth; *La Societa Ancadegli Abruzzi*, 1425 Ellsworth; *La Societa San Emidio*, 1135 Ellsworth; *La Societa San Maria S.S. della Rosa*, 2132 Ellsworth; *La Societa Michele Archangelo*, 1218 Ellsworth; *La Societa San Panteleone Miglianico*, 1203 Ellsworth.[10]

One of Philadelphia's most ambitious Italian immigrants, C.C.A. Baldi, in 1906, was president of multiple Italian societies organized around traditional village memory, the societies of Santa Barbara, San Biazio, and Maria Santissimo della Grazia. Baldi's home village of Riccia just south of Campobasso in Molise was a location of emigration to Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Society of Mutual Support of San Panteleone, of the town of San Panteleone in the Calabria region of far Southern Italy, welcomed "all Italians and sons of Italian Catholics" ages 18 to 40 who hailed from that village and its immediate region to join their association.[11]   The Castrogivannesi Mutual Aid Society of Philadelphia included those from that village in Central Sicily[12] while *La Societa Sulmonese*, formed in 1906, was for the people from this mountainous Abruzzo city and the surrounding area of Sulmona, 50 miles inland from the Adriatic near Mt. Amara. [13] In 1913 Ottaviano Capponi started the *Societa Beniamino Gigli fra Marchegiani* for

the emigrated artisans from Italy's Marche region.[14] And, *La Societa Unione Calabrese, La La Societa Palmolese, La Federazione Politica della Societa Siciliana* and the *L'Unione Villamagnese* were large societies that attempted to bring Italian Philadelphians from whole regions in Italy under one organizational umbrella, broadening the geographic base of recruitment for ethnic associations and swelling memberships.[15] None of these turn-of-the century, vibrant, thriving ethnic associations with voluminous memberships would ever be listed in the Philadelphia City Directory.

The Gamm & Putnam study's finding that "immigration...appears to have little or no impact on associationism" is reached only because, in the case of Philadelphia, the vast majority of ethnic voluntary associations existed below the radar of the Putnam & Gamm study.[16] Thus, the preference for mainstream, Anglo American, Protestant, voluntary associations produced a bias that failed to understand the expansive universe created by simple Italian Americans in a large industrial city of the Northeast.[17]

The Impact of Abruzzo's Civic Heritage in Philadelphia: Economy and Society in Rural Abruzzo

Let's shift the focus to the immigrants themselves, the rural farm and town workers and displaced small peasants, the rural, mountain proletariat of Abruzzo who faced the terrifying prospect of overseas travel and immigration to support family and came to occupy and make ethnic Philadelphia in the late 1800s. Fernand Braudel reminds us of the historical disadvantage of mountain peoples; as he writes in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II:*

> Whether settled in tiny hamlets or in large villages, the mountain population is generally insignificant in comparison with the vast spaces surrounding it, where travel is difficult...in the mountains, society, civilization, and economy all bear the mark of backwardness and poverty.[18]

The Abruzzo region also bore the mark of Braudel's poignant description, the mountains an inhospitable zone for productive farming, its people struggling to eke out a living on what limited opportunities the slopes provided for tillage, dairy and pasture and the depressed economy of timber. The people of Abruzzo were always, as Eide Iengo states in his study of emigration from this region, "on the edge of financial disaster, an area of hunger, sickness and misery."[19]

The Culture of Mobility

Seasonal migration in search of supplemental labor within Italy was a part of mountain existence in the 19th century. Depending on conditions in Abruzzo, it was normal for farm workers from L'Aquila and, further east in the Penne regions to migrate north to Germany and to Austria-Hungary to find work.[20] Also, there was an established seasonal migration pattern, an "internal circuit of L'Aquila, Sulmona, Avezzano; from Vasto and Lanciano, in Chieti; from Isernia and Agnone in Molise" to locations within Italy, later to Rome to work in construction.[21]

The Collapse of Economy and Society in Abruzzo

Unification of Italy as a national state and modernization were not kind to the Abruzzo small land owners and farm workers. The Apennines in Abruzzo had long been stripped of its forests to supply timber for Italian construction and for export, eliminating a timber economy and depriving Abruzzesse peasants of simple materials like free firewood. The enclosure of lands and estates, formerly open spaces available for small plantings and the gathering of timber for sale, further shrunk the opportunities for income in Abruzzo; it also converted small farmers into day laborers as the lands of Abruzzo were consolidated into larger holdings.

In addition, soil erosion resulted as winter rains carried away the topsoil unprotected by forests, further denigrating farming prospects. Town artisans in Abruzzo also lost ground in the late 19th century as they were unable to adjust their simple, elementary methods of production to the machine-driven and the larger, more efficient workshops that began to dominate the commercial markets.[22]

Iengo's statement on the demise of economy and society and the rise in migration in Abruzzo in the years after Italian unification helps us understand the flight from Abruzzo:

> The years of unification did not temper the region's complete hardship. On the contrary, exorbitant financial costs, the crisis of the shipbuilding industry, the introduction of the obligatory tax, alienation from the Church, the appropriation of communal lands by the aristocracy and rural bourgeoisie in small phases, the transformation of economic relations in the mountain economy and in the plains of the region, the decrease in income with the rise in the standard of living, new increases in interest payments that was basically usury... for the workers of Abruzzo suffering from indebtedness,

malnutrition, they continued their tradition of looking
outside, to other regions, for a means of survival as
conditions worsened.[23]

The pattern of emigration overseas and the escalation of the exodus from
Abruzzi in the late 1800s and early decades of the 1900s are displayed in
Tables 1-3. Table 1 provides a general description of emigration from
Abruzzo and the accelerating pace of the exodus in the late 1800s, early
1900s.

Table 1. Emigrants from Abruzzo and Molise, 1876-1915.

Years	Number of Emigrants
1876-1880	6,482
1881-1885	27,921
1886-1890	60,076
1891-1895	62,131
1896-1900	88,783
1901-1905	247,550
1906-1910	236,664
1911-1915	173,984

Source: De Nardis, 1994, p. 93. [24]

Table 2 describes the emigration from Abruzzo by occupation.
Artisans from this region were also losing their hold on the countryside in the
late 19th century and taking their chances overseas while farm laborers had
been turned into day laborers as an emigrating category of labor, indicating
that there had been a further deterioration of the rural working class in
Abruzzo.

**Table 2. Percentage of Emigrants from Abruzzo-Molise by
Occupation, 1876-1915.**

Year	Farm Labor	Artisan	Industrial Labor	Day Labor
1876-1880	74.3%	2.3%	15.1%	12.2%
1881-1885	72.9	2.4	6.7	16.5
1886-1890	78	4.8	7.1	7.9
1891-1895	74.6	5.2	6.0	9.2
1896-1900	64.2	6.1	6.6	15.5
1901-1905	54.8	4.4	6.3	31.8
1906-1910	47.5	4.6	6.4	38.3
1911-1915	50.6	6.0	7.0	33.0

Source: De Nardis, p. 115.

Table 3 is an emigration portrait of the most mountainous region of Abruzzo, L'Aquila; it reflects the trend toward the region's option of last resort, migration overseas. The massive exodus by the early 1900s by a mountainous people formerly held together by tradition and family and regional migration to supplement income is a confirming statement of Braudel's thesis on mountain existence, its hardship and fragile bonds of economy and society. The mountain people of L'Aquila, compared to the plains population of Teramo province, held out against the final resort of overseas migration longer until conditions offered them no choice but to flee.

Table 3. Emigration from L'Aquila Province, 1876-1907.

Year	Europe	Overseas	Total
1880	23	105	128
1881	12	179	191
1882	439	333	772
1883	2,828	283	3,111
1884	1,515	91	1,606
1885	223	308	531
1886	388	471	859
1887	218	666	884
1888	806	958	1,764
1889	841	1,051	1,892
1890	1,506	1,597	3,103
1891	2,355	467	2,822
1892	2,212	414	2,626
1893	2,061	2,496	4,557
1894	2,050	885	2,935
1895	1,209	1,917	3,126
1896	1,158	3,338	4,496
1897	656	3,401	4,057
1898	2,030	2,211	4,241
1899	513	4,143	4,656
1900	1,958	4,640	6,598
1901	7,114	9,068	16,182
1902	4,613	10,338	14,951
1905	4,569	11,759	16,024

Source: Arpea, 1987, p. 37.[25]

Thus, a rural people used to seasonal migration to supplement their meager economies turned more easily to overseas options, first to South America and then more often to America and eventually in a singular path to Philadelphia.

Spoltore Mutual Aid: The Transportable Civic Code of Abruzzo

This emigrating mass, this impoverished rural proletariat, however, did not arrive without civic awareness or social skills in the construction of small-scale democracy; on the contrary, there was a rich heritage of civic engagement among the rural workers of Abruzzo, primarily in the form of institutions they made themselves, such as the democratic workers mutual aid society. Let us analyze just one of Abruzzo's workers' mutual aid societies from the late nineteenth century to penetrate and understand the nature of communal practices and civic experience among the emigrating peoples of Abruzzo.

The village and commune of Spoltore is seven miles inland from Pescara city in Abruzzo's Pescara Province.[26] Spoltore was in the grain and cereal-producing "plains" region of agriculture, the Adriatic coastal zone of Teramo, Pescara and Chieti Provinces that dispatched its displaced small farmers, town petty bourgeoisie, artisans and agricultural workers overseas en masse to America, especially Philadelphia.

In 1880, Spoltore established a mutual aid society, the Spoltore Workers Society of Mutual Aid, a voluntary association for the self-help and support of its working class members. The Spoltore workers society focused on health and financial benefits for its members— its rules stipulated that sickness or disabilities, "not caused by vice or bad personal habits or a pre-existing sickness," were reimbursed up to 80 Lire per month or until the member was healthy enough to return to work. The society also made allowances for the pensions of its older members; one had to be a regular, dues-paying member for a minimum of 20 consecutive years before the pension could be applied at age 60.[27]

The Spoltore Society was an association backed by an ethic of class solidarity and civic care for the worker's immediate group and the artisan's appreciation for the sanctity of work. It reminded its members that the "purpose of the association for participating members is to be useful and helpful to each other in the material matters of the order as well as intellectual and moral concerns."[28] In 1884, the Spoltore Society registered 86 men and four women as active members, but by December of 1885 the numbers were down to 59 men and only one woman. The group consisted of 42 married males, 17 single men and one married woman. Five men had joined in 1885, but 28 had left, which demonstrates the fluid nature of this association in a social setting in which rural workers were constantly on the

move, searching for openings in an economy of diminishing opportunities. The society also had a leisure function for the commune's workers, a social room set aside for the casual passing of time among friends, for playing cards and other pastimes.[29]

There was a code of behavior expected of members described in the 44 pages of its association manual, *The Rules of the Workers' Society of Mutual Support of Spoltore*. The society took care to minimize friction and the potential for disagreements within a small group—members were reminded to "maintain cordial fraternal relations" and to "absolutely respect the honor of members and treat each member without prejudice and, finally, to spread the principles of mutual support among the working class."[30] The society exhibited a democratic administrative structure, its officers elected by the assembly of members. Italian associations typically operated through a board, and Spoltore was no exception; elections were by secret ballot, run by the president, "assisted by two members who knew how to write."[31]

Thus, this workers' association of mutual support, started in 1880 in a small hill town in the Abruzzo zone of emigration, operated in similar form and function to the Italian-American associations that burst, 20 years later, upon South Philadelphia and the many immigrant Italian communities of Pennsylvania that were formed wherever Italians found labor. The rules and requirements were public, written and formal—125 total—and the content and scope of the associations, its ethic of self-education, its strict attention to group and individual discipline and allowance for leisure, even the Sunday afternoon meeting time convenient for those on a workers' schedule, were similar to the codes and communal practices of the Italian-American ethnic associations of Philadelphia established in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The Southern Italian Ethic of Civic Virtue Transported to Pennsylvania

The Abraham Lincoln Society of Mutual Aid of Pecksville, Pennsylvania, was just one of the hundreds of Italian-American mutual aid societies that appeared wherever Italian immigrants established a community in Pennsylvania; its organizational records remain intact and are a window into the society's structure and purpose, representing an ideal type that defined the Italian-American beneficial association of the period. The society was started by Italian mine workers in the coal country of Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1924. There was symmetry between the civic life of the Italian coal workers of Lackawanna County and the rural/town proletariat of Spoltore in the associational habit that defined both communities of workers.

The original members' book of the Pennsylvania Lincoln Society contained 55 separate regulations for the governance of the association. This community of coal miners employed the language of enlightened solidarity, reminding its members that it was "necessary to respect the laws"—the rules

are meant to promote the solidarity and progress of the society." The workers were "bound on their honor" to follow the rules and to submit to an overarching concern for each other, a "reciprocal solidarity among men."[32] The congruity of structure, style and purpose between Abruzzo and Pennsylvania associations was indeed remarkable and indicates that a high civic tradition and spirit had also immigrated to Philadelphia with the Abruzzesse.

"La Colonia Italiana" of Philadelphia

In Philadelphia's expansive Italian-American community, "La Colonia Italiana" of South Philadelphia, we observe that Italian-styled ethnic associations sprang up immediately in this dense zone of Italian settlement and culture; Italians settled in other section of the city and many smaller districts of Pennsylvania, but South Philadelphia was the heart of the ethnic community.

Membership populations of ethnic associations in Philadelphia in the early 1900s varied but local association memberships could be remarkably robust.   The Irish American Donegal Association of Philadelphia's recorded 825 dues-paying members on its roll in 1907 while the Ancient Order of Hibernians registered similar high numbers for many of its 87 Philadelphia divisions in 1899.[33] Membership size for many of the numerous Italian societies is difficult to identify due to the loss of original association records, but the populations of some associations were sizeable. The public spectacle that was the annual banquet of the Italian-American society in South Philadelphia, an obligatory public gesture announcing status and influence in the ethnic community, was an index to the size of membership—more members meant higher income and the potential for a bolder statement during the winter banquet circuit. The Italian barbers, *La Societa Barbieri Italiani Stella d'Italia*, had a large membership and were known for their extravagant masquerade balls in the early 1900s.[34]

The Italian-styled ethnic association in Philadelphia during these years was primarily a beneficial society which acted as a form of workers' health insurance. The associations were run by the members, in essence a system of committees, officers were elected annually and financial business was conducted in the public forum that was the monthly meeting. To receive health benefits, there was a waiting period, usually around six months, and a limit on the length of time members could be on sick benefits; members also had to submit to a physical, and there were restrictions on "pre-existing" sickness. The Italian-American societies allowed benefits to be carried to Italy and, upon return to America, reinstated after a period of waiting reflecting the transatlantic mobility of its membership.

The associations were places for male leisure but also required a

strict code of member discipline in the attempt to create a moral community. *The Mutual Aid Society of the Marchigiani* was an early 1900's association in the Philadelphia area that restricted its membership to those born in the Marche region just north of Abruzzo; the society defined an ethic of communal solidarity in an oath required of its members:

> "...you are now in the home where our family is formed.
> It is a family of *mutuo soccorso*. It is an organization of
> well-loved brothers. You are to love and respect your
> brothers..."[35]

Members of the Society of Marche were "never to reveal to anyone what is heard or seen in this hall."[36] The codes of discipline required courtesy in public debate and association rules admonished members against conflicts that could fracture the calm of the group. These modest, working men's associations were also locations for education and eventually for the mobilization of Italian identity.

Italian Philadelphia: An Abruzzo Town

Philadelphia became a city of chain migration for the displaced workers and artisans of Abruzzo, established by word-of-mouth and by labor agents who roamed the Italian region. In Philadelphia, the Italians settled in Southwark, an area of old-stock housing just south of Center City. Southwark was an area that had been home to the emigrating Jews from Russia who then relocated once again to suburban locations in Philadelphia and to the Irish, now moving in the late 1800s and early 1900s to areas further out in the vast expanse of land that was the city of Philadelphia to Germantown, Mt. Airy and beyond.

In the end, it was labor opportunities in Philadelphia and the surrounding community as well as new niches in the division of labor that drew the Abruzzesse to Philadelphia. Philadelphia attracted Italians from other southern regions, but it was Abruzzo that became an appendage of the city. Bianca Arcangeli writes in her study of Italian Philadelphia, "Beginning in 1900, Abruzzo and Molise and Campania had a considerable increase in their own emigrant contribution to the colony of Philadelphia...Abruzzo, especially the area around Chieti, surpassed the numbers destined for Philadelphia from Campobasso, from the towns of Riccia, Venafro, St. Maria Oliveto and Agnone."[37]

She goes on to state that it was "agents who combed the countryside of Abruzzo spreading propaganda about the benefits of emigration to Philadelphia and the promise of immediate work"[38] that swelled the transatlantic steamships connecting the U.S. with Italian emigrating labor.

Table 4 displays the influence of one Philadelphia *padrone*, Frank Di Berdardino who had an office in South Philadelphia:

Table 4. Italian Immigration to Philadelphia Influenced by Di Berardino by Italian Region

Region	1900-19	1920-29	1930-40	Total
Abruzzo	10,321	7,179	381	17,881
Campania	1,304	2,963	178	4,445
Sicily	2,274	2,510	180	3,964
Calabria	967	1,652	114	2,733
Molise	732	1,032	63	1,827
Marche	936	692	81	1,709
Puglia	517	837	45	1,399
Lazio	823	500	40	1,363
Tuscany	129	192	14	336
Veneto	72	226	8	306
Piedmont	81	211	14	306
Emilia	61	77	4	152
Liguria	17	98	11	126
Venice-Giulia	5	84	15	104
Sardinia	76	88	5	169
Lombardy	23	33	3	59
Totals	17,338	18,384	1,157	36,879

Source: Juliani, 1981.[39]

De Nardis writes of Di Berdardino, "His firm, publicized as a travel agency, served primarily as a recruitment agency and bank for the emigrants. Di Berdardino drew up, for example, different labor contracts from the Italian immigrant workforce; one important one was with the Rail Road Company as maintenance workers."[40]

The emigration sponsored by Di Berdardino was, as Richard Juliani has written, an emigration of the Abruzzo region, "...9,463 from the province of Chieti and 7,153 from the province of Teramo, both in Abruzzo...exceeded the totals of any other region" in Italy.[41] Daniella De Nardis writes in her work, *Abruzzo Emigration, The Exodus from the Countryside, 1876-1915*: "The Philadelphia branch office for the labor contracts was situated in a strategic place in Abruzzo, and it became a direct connection for more of the out-of-the-way villages of the region and eventual relocation to the Italian colony of South Philadelphia."[42] The efforts of this energetic Philadelphia-based labor boss and others explain the reason that

Philadelphia became a city of the Abruzzesse, the result of active agents of emigration and chain migration spread through kinship associations.

Thus, by the early decades of the 20th century South Philadelphia had developed into a self-reliant urban village whose ethnic economy employed its own people and supplied a demand for specialized products and services for an expanding immigrant population. An Italian immigrant from L'Aquila or Chieti might feel right at home, strolling the vicinity of 4th to 11th Streets along Christian Street in 1910 and, in fact, most of his or her needs could be met within a few short blocks.

Italian-American banks lined the streets of the Italian district of South Philadelphia. The neighborhood bank in Philadelphia's Italian sections was more of a working office for all sorts of transactions required by the immigrant community, from wiring money home to family in Italy to arranging for steamship tickets. *Banca Pasquale*, in 1919, was on South 10th Street, and if you walked through its doors you could arrange to have money sent to Italy, have a letter written in English, and even contract for help with citizenship applications or make a reservation for the steamship back to Italy.[43]

A two-minute walk found you at the *Banca Abruzzi* on 7th and Carpenter Streets and not far away was the *Banca dell'Aquila* which was started in the late 1890s by Thomas D. Yannessa, an immigrant from Aquila Province in Western Abruzzo.[44] Frank Di Berdardino, at his office at 821 Christian St., offered sales of tickets on steamships back and forth to Italy— he promoted himself as a "direct general passenger agent."[45]

The Italian enclave was also a concentrated zone of small businesses and shops that supplied the burgeoning demand created by the ethnic population in the early decades of the 20th century. Within a zone of four or five blocks you could find Borgetti electrical contractor on South 8th, Giacopetti Pharmacy on 6th & Christian, stock up on cigars at Mario D'Urso Cigars at 8th & Christian, shop at Arano's for olive oil, cheese and pasta at 8th & Catharine and get fitted for a suit at Del Grosso Tailors at 8th & Reed. Tetti's Real Estate handled "foreign exchange, steamship tickets, employment office, collection, notary, express, money orders." You had to walk a few blocks west and east to purchase wine at Di Fillipo's wine merchants on South 13th & Dickinson. Funeral arrangements were also in the neighborhood at Revello's Funeral Parlor at 12th & Ellsworth.[46] You could also stroll into "Sala Abruzzese" of Philadelphia's first and largest ethnic association, the Abruzzo Union at 721 Carpenter Street in South Philadelphia, to socialize, read a newspaper or simply chat with one's own from the region of Abruzzo.

The Associational Impulse of Emigrating Southern Italy

The impulse and need to form protective associations, societies of mutual support, was evident in a people crushed by outside social forces, by the nationalization and modernization of a formerly protected, regional, rural agricultural economy. There have been historical questions raised about the civic maturity of Southern Italians, whether the poorer peasants and town artisans had the initiative, training and sufficient communal spirit to form voluntary associations in the small towns and rural outposts of Southern Italy in the late nineteenth century.[47]

For the deracinated and displaced town artisans of Abruzzo, an historical cohort on the eve of mass overseas relocation to America, many to Philadelphia, we have found an advanced, enlightened network of mutual aid societies, communal orphanages, day-care centers, schools and shelters, all backed by an ethic of communal humanitarian concern and organizational sophistication. Workers formed voluntary associations that set common sense limits on levels of support, established democratic methods of group formation and espoused an ethic of communal solidarity that was a working educational primer on the values of community and local civic responsibility. The modest levels of support derived from workers mutual aid societies could not match the level of loss experienced by the collapse of the traditional rural economy in Abruzzo; as the overwhelmed Abruzzessi emigrated en masse, they carried their legacy of localized self-help and civic initiative with them.

We have taken a microscopic view of the communal energy and local institutions of worker self-help in small-town, rural Abruzzo in the late 1800s, institutions at the center of the zones of emigration that would relocate overseas. The small town and rural associations of Southern Italy were a well-established influence among the poor peoples of Abruzzo whose ethic of grass roots self-help, moral uplifting and democratic means of operation could only have imprinted on the mass of Abruzzessi destined to resettle overseas, so many to Philadelphia.

The ethnic association that proliferated in the early 1900s in Philadelphia and other American cities was its own type derived from old-world village tradition, operating in ethnic enclaves of subterranean existence. Its spirit and essence were similar to the type De Tocqueville praised as an American institution, but its structure, style and self-imposed disciplinary codes were derived from civic and cultural practices of long duration carried out in impoverished, rural Southern Italy. When we understand the totality of the network of ethnic associations that sprouted spontaneously in late nineteenth-early twentieth-century Philadelphia, acknowledging the old-world model as a valid imprint, we encounter a much more vibrant, dynamic urban setting teeming with civic energy and expression.

ENDNOTES

[1] Eide Spedicato Iengo, "Dalle migrazione agli esparati," in *Storia Urbana* (Franco Angeli 2002) 116.

[2] Gerald Gamm and Robert Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxix: 4 (Spring, 1999) 511-557, 513.   Human capital in the Putnam scheme is for the individual, training and education that increase market value.

[3] James Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital,"in *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, Supplement, 95-120, (1988) 104.

[4] Gerald Gamm and Robert Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940,"in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxix: 4 (Spring, 1999) 511-557,   529. Rowland Berthoff, *An Unsettled People; Social Order and Disorder in American History*, (NY: Harper & Row, 1971) 272-274.   Berthoff presents the Eastern city as the ideal home for the growth of associations.

[5] Gerald Gamm and Robert Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxix: 4 (Spring, 1999) 511-557, p. 538.

[6] Ibid., 548.

[7] Ibid., 543.

[8] Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory (1900). Philadelphia was not one of the cities tested in the original study but a location that would have also have skewed results using city directories as a primary source.   Looking at the Philadelphia City Directories of 1910, 1920, and 1925, years when the Italian associations were at their peak strength, only the Italian Federation was could be found.

[9] Edwin Fenton, "Italians in the Labor Movement," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVI (1959), 145; *Il Momento* (July 19, 1919).

[10] Hugo Maiale, *The Italian Vote in Philadelphia Between 1928 and 1946* (Philadelphia, 1950) 126.

[11] *Il Momento* (April 7, 1917).

[12] Minute book of the *La Societa de Mutuo Soccorso Napoleone Colajanni tra Castrogiovannesi*. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, MSS 77; Box 1)

[13] *Il Momento* (April 28, 1906).

[14] Stefano Luconi, *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001) 37.

[15] Hugo Maiale, *The Italian Vote in Philadelphia Between 1928 and 1946* (Philadelphia, 1950) 126.

[16] Gerald Gamm and Robert Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxix: 4 (Spring, 1999) 511-557, 517.   The researcher needs to cast a wider net to discover the depth of civic engagement among ethnic groups in Northeastern cities in the late 1800s, early 1900s; the ethnic press, church records, and association minute books are solid sources. Still, the memory of the existence of so many of the Italian-American associations of Philadelphia have been extinguished as the print records of their existence have disappeared.

[17] Ibid., 528. The study did count the branch associations as it inspected membership directories of four types of mainstream associations—"Rotary Clubs, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Episcopal churches, and Masons—and found that the analysis of membership lists yielded the "largest numbers of local chapters...in the smallest cities."

[18] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. 1 (NY, 1972) 32-33.

[19] Eide Spedicato Iengo, "Dalle migrazione agli esparati, *Storia Urbana*," Franco Angeli (2002) 112.

[20] Ibid., 120.

[21] Daniela De Nardis, "L'Emigrazione Abruzzese: Tra Ottocento e Novecento: Fuga dale campagne dal 1876 al 1915," Adelmo Polla, in *Cerchio* (L'Aquila, 1994) 86-87.

[22] Daniela De Nardis, "L'Emigrazione Abruzzese: Tra Ottocento e Novecento: Fuga dale campagne dal 1876 al 1915," Adelmo Polla, in *Cerchio* (L'Aquila, 1994) 113.
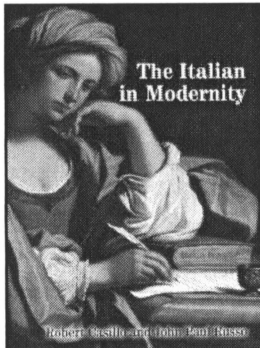
[23] Eide Spedicato Iengo, "Dalle migrazione agli esparati, *Storia Urbana*," Franco Angeli (2002) 112.

[24] Daniela De Nardis, "L'Emigrazione Abruzzese: Tra Ottocento e Novecento: Fuga dale campagne dal 1876 al 1915," Adelmo Polla, in *Cerchio* (L'Aquila, 1994) 93.

[25] Mario Arpea, *Alle origine dell'emigrazione abruzze: La vicenda dell'altpiano delle Roche* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1987).

[26] Eide Spedicato Iengo, "Dalle migrazione agli esparati, *Storia Urbana*," Franco Angeli (2002) 111.

[27] Rules of the Workers' Society of Mutual Support of Spoltore, 1892, State Archives of Pescarea, Box 2, Folder 42, 4.

[28] Ibid., 5.

[29] Government questionnaire for the Workers' Society of Spoltore, 1884-85. General Office of Statistics: Department of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, Province of Teramo, State Archives of Italy, 3. Teramo, Box 98, xxvi, Folder 15.

[30] Rules of the Workers' Society of Mutual Support of Spoltore, 1892, State Archives of Pescarea, Box 2, Folder 42, 11.

[31] Ibid., 13.

[32] Regulations of the Abraham Lincoln Mutual Aid Society of Pecksville, Pennsylvania, 1924, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, MSS 51, Box 1.

[33] Minutebook of Donegal Social and Patriotic Association of Philadelphia, 1895-1925; *Irish-American Review*, Sept. 2, 1899.

[34] Edwin Fenton, "Italians in the Labor Movement," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVI (1959) 145.

[36] Regolamento della societa Marchigiana di mutuo soccorso. 1911, 9m93-57, Box 1.

[37] Bianca Arcangeli, Le Colonie italiane di Philadelphia, *Annual della Facolta di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Universita di Napoli*, 16 (1973-74) 217-30, 240.

[38] Ibid, 151.

[39] Richard Juliani, "The Italian Community of Philadelphia," *Little Italies in North America*, Robert Harney & J. Vincenza Scarpaci, (Toronto, CN, 1981) 85-104, 95.

[40] Daniela De Nardis, L'Emigrazione Abruzzese: Tra Ottocento e Novecento: Fuga dale campagne dal 1876 al 1915, Adelmo Polla, *Cerchio*, (L'Aquilla 1994) 151.

[41] Richard Juliani, "The Italian Community of Philadelphia," *Little Italies in North America*, Robert Harney & J. Vincenza Scarpaci, (Toronto, CN, 1981) 85-104, 94.

[42] Daniela De Nardis, "L'Emigrazione Abruzzese: Tra Ottocento e Novecento: Fuga dale campagne dal 1876 al 1915," Adelmo Polla, in *Cerchio* (L'Aquila, 1994) 151.

[43] *Il Momento* (August 9, 1919).

[44] Richard Juliani, *The Social Organization of Immigration: The Italians of Philadelphia* (NY, Arno, 1981) 28.

[45] *Il Momento* (August 2, 1919).

[46] *Il Momento* (Jan. 5, 1918).

[47] The extreme version of this argument is set forth in Edward Banfield's work, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Glencoe, IL, 1958).