

**This year the Festa Italiana celebrates two related themes: the Unification of Italy, known in Italian as the Risorgimento, or resurgence, and Italian Immigration in America.**

## **The Risorgimento**

We celebrate Italian unification as taking place in 1861, when Victor Emanuel II was proclaimed king of Italy, making this year the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but unification occurred gradually over a period of years. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Italy consisted of a patchwork of independent kingdoms and duchies controlled or influenced by the European powers, mainly the Hapsburgs of the Austrian Empire. Meanwhile revolutionary sentiment was sweeping much of Europe, including Italy. Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi were the most prominent revolutionary figures active as early as the 1830s and later escaping death sentences for leading an uprising against the Savoy Kingdom of Sardinia, Mazzini to France, and Garibaldi to the Americas. In 1848 and 1849 there were uprisings throughout the northern half of Italy, including one in which Garibaldi and Mazzini declared a Roman Republic, against the temporal power of the Pope, forcing him to flee Rome, but were later defeated and went back into exile as the Pope returned.



**Victor Emmanuel II**



**Mazzini**

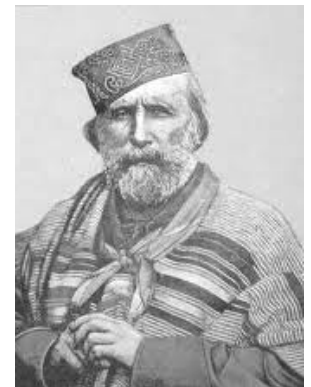
Meanwhile, Carlo Alberto, the Savoy king was defeated in an attempt to drive the Austrians from Italy and abdicated in favor of his son Victor Emmanuel II, whose prime minister was Camillo Benso di Cavour, another prime mover for unification. By 1860, in collaboration with France, Cavour and Victor Emmanuel had succeeded in defeating Austria in two major battles and annexing the states of northern and central Italy. In 1860 Garibaldi and about 1,000 volunteers (I Mille) sailed from near Genoa to Sicily to aid the Sicilian rebels against the weak forces of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and Francis its king, in Naples,

Garibaldi's campaign in Sicily was a great success, and when he proceeded to the mainland the population of southern Italy supported him as his army of volunteers continued to grow. Meanwhile Victor Emmanuel's army approached Naples from the north, ultimately succeeded in deposing Francis and annexing the whole of the South, at which point in 1861

he was declared King of Italy by his own parliament under the leadership of Cavour, who died shortly thereafter. The government moved from Turin to Florence. Thus, the entire peninsula was united except for Rome, which remained under Papal control and under French protection, and Venice, which was still under Austria.

Garibaldi organized a volunteer force to attack Rome but the new Italian government disapproved and confronted Garibaldi at Aspromonte, in Calabria, wounding and even imprisoning him for a time. Victor Emmanuel instead negotiated with the French to withdraw its papal garrison. In 1866 Victor Emmanuel invaded Venice, with Garibaldi as one of his commanders and, in league with Prussia, which was fighting Austria at the time, succeeded in driving out the Austrian troops and annexing the region.

Conflict continued in 1867, again with Garibaldi's involvement, to take Rome in some bloody, but unsuccessful battles, but ultimately, when the Franco Prussian War began in 1870, the French no longer would provide papal protection, Rome was finally captured by the Italian army, and in June of 1871 the capital of Italy was officially moved from Florence to Rome.



**Garibaldi**



**Cavour**

As we celebrate Italy@150 here in the USA we need only explore the web sites of the Italian government, including the Embassy of Italy, and those of regional, provincial, and municipal governments and other organizations to see that by far most Italians are proud of this history and have organized many celebratory events. At the same time Italy is not without those who either shun or oppose these celebrations, and express dissatisfaction with the result of unification 150 years later through letters to the editor saying that their regions have not benefited as much as the rest of Italy or, more concretely, through secessionist movements. This may be influenced by today's hard economic times that affect all of us..

The Festa Italiana Foundation congratulates Italy and its citizens for keeping alive Italian culture and the spirit that led to the unification of Italy.

## Italian Immigration in America

Our immigration is Italy's emigration. It is clear that emigration has played a significant part in Italy's history since unification when one looks at the sheer proportion of its population that has gone abroad. It has been estimated that about 29 million persons have emigrated from 1861 to 1985, or about the equivalent of the population of Italy at the time of unification. Almost every city, town, province and region has its own emigration web pages and often even an emigration museum. Over 30 films have been produced regarding Italian emigration over the years. At the national level, there is the Museo Nazionale dell' Emigrazione, housed in the monument to Vittorio Emanuele in central Rome. On Youtube one can find multiple renditions of many videos featuring emigration songs going back even to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, primarily expressing the hardships and homesickness suffered by emigrants. Indeed the motivation of most of this emigration has been to find work and in many cases to escape poverty.



Italy's emigration is best understood in waves. The first wave, was from 1861 to 1900, about 7 million people, from both northern and southern regions of Italy and directed towards north and South America. From 1900 to 1930 the pattern shifted to emigration primarily from southern Italy, about 13 million people directed towards Brazil, Argentina, and the USA, in that order of quantity. During the depression and World War II, emigration diminished, but there were still about 9 million emigrants between 1930 and 1985. By the 1960s emigration again diminished with the arrival of the "economic miracle" in Italy and began to reflect destinations in the rest of Europe and a certain amount of "brain drain". About a fourth of current emigration is from professional workers with college degrees. (It is unclear whether the above figures have netted out the persons who returned to Italy.) Meanwhile these Italian emigrants and their descendants have resulted in a substantial number of persons of Italian origin living abroad. These are estimated, by the Scalabrinian Fathers, whose mission involves the care of migrants, at about 80 million, of which about 25 are in Brazil, 20 in Argentina, and 18 in the US, the latter representing about 6% of our population.

The first Italian to reside in America was Pietro Cesare Alberti, a Venetian seaman who, in 1635, settled in what would eventually become New York City. A group of 200 Waldensians, Protestants that predated the Reformation, arrived from Italy in 1640 in search of a more hospitable place to practice their religion. A number of other early immigrants left their mark in US history, including Filippo Mazzei, a writer and close friend of Thomas Jefferson, William Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and later artists such as Constantino Brumidi, who decorated the Capitol dome, and the Piccirilli brothers, who executed the sculpture in the Lincoln Memorial, and Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's librettist who had moved to New York. These 19<sup>th</sup> century immigrants were typically better educated professionals, in contrast with the later immigrants of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Most of our Italian immigrants to the US, especially during the period of massive migration before 1930, came from southern Italy, especially from Sicily and Naples, parts of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This region was mainly rural, overpopulated and economically underdeveloped, and benefited little from the industrialization that characterized the north after unification. The Italian government initially encouraged emigration of landless peasants (contadini) to relieve economic pressures in the South. In the U.S., most Italians began their new lives as unskilled, manual workers. They gradually moved from the lower rungs of the economic scale in the early 1900s to a level comparable to the national average by 1970. The Italian-American communities, the "Little Italies", have often been characterized by strong ties with family, the Catholic Church, fraternal societies and political parties.

Many of us would recognize the names of the prominent Italian Americans of the 20<sup>th</sup> and more recently 21<sup>st</sup> century that emerged from these communities, sometimes from the second third and fourth generation of their families in the U.S., people like Fiorello LaGuardia, mayor of New York, Amadeo Giannini, founder of Bank of America, Charles Bonaparte, founder of the FBI, Mother Francesca Cabrini, and, of course, Frank Sinatra, Joe DiMaggio, and most recently Geraldine Ferraro, Nancy Pelosi, and Leon Panetta. The list goes on and on. They are all part of our heritage.

Here in Washington, Italian Americans are living everywhere in the metropolitan area, working in government and the private sector, and we even had our own Little Italy, with the Holy Rosary church at its center, but the community has dispersed, replaced by large apartment buildings, government offices and the freeway. It's a little sad, but the Festa Italiana is doing its part to recall the memories.