

# Italian Immigration



Luigi Trevisani 1919 Passport





*Antique Italian Map  
Showing the area of Lucca, Tuscany*



# *Italian Immigration*

by Laura Nicklas Hine

During the 1920s, there was a great wave of immigrants arriving in the United States. Here in Cuyahoga Heights, they were drawn perhaps by word of jobs, perhaps by chance, or other reasons. For the Italians who came to Cuyahoga Heights, they were following those who came before them. These Italian immigrants were primarily from Tuscany, Italy. Though they were unable to speak much English, they were willing to work hard. They found jobs, made friends with the neighboring truck farmers, and used their bricklaying skills to build homes for their families that still stand today. They came, they earned money, they returned to Italy, told their family and friends about this village, and they came back the next year, bringing more relatives and friends. They were joined by Polish and other immigrants as well—a few coming before the Italians, but most coming soon after.

As you'll see below, most of the Italians in Cuyahoga Heights came from Comune di Sillano in the Province of Lucca, Italy. Everyone always says that everyone in the village is related to everyone else, and that's very true! The five families who have the most people in the village related to them are the Adorni, Angiocchi, Collecchi, Contipelli and Fontana families. Not only are these five families all related to each other, but many other families married into these five families. If your name appears in the list below, you are all related to each other through the Adorni, Angiocchi, Fontana, Contipelli or Collecchi families, either by blood or marriage!

Adorni, Aguzzi, Angiocchi, Baciak, Baracz, Billi, Bohdan, Casavecchia, Chase, Collecchi, Contipelli, Corradi, Fantelli, Fontana, Gallitz, Guidetti, Guidotti, Hine, Kaliszewski, Massey, Nicastro, Nobili, Pallini, Pellini, Piasecki, Radaszka, Reali, Santini, Smosarski, Talani, Venchi, Waldemarson, Wencke

•

## **History of Lucca, Tuscany, Italy**

Lucca was created as a Republic by Napoleon and lasted as such from 1801 to 1805. From 1805 to 1814, it was a principality ruled by Napoleon's sister. It was assigned to the Spanish Crown by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In 1847, the Crown ceded Lucca to Tuscany. Tuscany has a proud history and traditions along with a unique character and flavor, including the regional delicacies that each part of Italy seems to offer. Many visitors who come to Tuscany bypass Lucca, a lovely city, which is protected within its perfectly preserved renaissance walls. Lucca is rich in history with over one hundred churches, excellent shops and restaurants.

Most Italians were peasants, called contadini (peasant farmers). Usually these small landholders rented their land from absentee landlords and would walk to their fields each morning. These peasants had

## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

little opportunity to rise either socially or economically. As the government became stronger, they imposed taxes on the peasant class, and used them to fill military quotas. Peasants maintained their old loyalties to their region and their priests. Usually they would not say they were Italian, but Tuscan. Due to these problems, they counted on their families. Families were very close in Italy. Everyday life was a challenge. There were earthquakes, droughts and flooding as well as frequent outbreaks of smallpox, meningitis, typhoid, cholera and malaria. These diseases were usually brought by invading troops. With these diseases running rampant, most families lost several children. Parents were happy and considered fortunate to live to see their children marry and have children. Death was frequent but not taken lightly. The death of a child caused parents much grief. Italians in the 1800s rarely ate meat. Most often they would eat rice, beans, bread, pasta, and polenta.

In Italy, it is uncommon to find very old graves. The graves are rented: either mausoleum type arrangements or in-ground burial. You don't OWN the grave. After a period of time, the families of the deceased are notified by the authorities a few months before they plan to exhume the plot. Relatives then have the choice of having the bones boxed and placed in a very small burial niche for a small expense or having them added to the cemetery's communal ossuary. The grave or mausoleum spot is then resold.

Before 1860, Italy was divided into eight separate states, with all but one ruled by foreign governments of the papacy. The movement known as Risorgimento was to unite Italy and remove foreign rule. The movement reached success and the north and central part of Italy prospered. But some did not prosper. In Italy, the contadini earned about 20 cents a day, where in America they could earn \$1.00 a day as a laborer. The peak years of immigration to America were between 1901 and 1914. Usually, the first arrivals paid for their relatives' passage and provided temporary lodging when newcomers arrived. At the turn of the century a one-way ticket in steerage cost about \$35.00. This was equivalent to several months of savings. Many Italians would come to the United States to work for just the summer and return to Italy for the winter. Many made this trip numerous times, never planning to stay in the United States permanently. They were called "Birds of Passage." However, many Italians found that they liked the United States, and finally sent for others in their family to come to the United States.

After acquiring their passport and papers, they travelled to the port city and stayed in a tiny village set up by the steamship companies. They were quarantined for five days and were given antiseptic baths, short haircuts, and medical exams. Many of the vessels were overcrowded. Each passenger was supplied with eating utensils, usually a fork, spoon and tin lunch pail. A typical breakfast would be coffee and a biscuit. Lunch was soup and one dish with meat every five days. For supper they would have a dish with meat, wine and bread. There were only two washrooms. They used the basin to wash their dishes, themselves, and their clothing. They were also used for seasickness. When the weather was nice, the immigrants could wander along their deck.

As they approached the New York Harbor, they saw the Statue of Liberty which was unveiled in the harbor on October 25, 1886. A small cutter approached the ship and a doctor boarded and checked everyone for obvious signs of illness. If there were no contagious diseases, the ship came to port at a wharf. The first and second-class passengers docked there. The third-class however, were loaded onto barges and taken to Ellis Island. They gazed at a huge, brick building.



*Giuncugnano*



*View of Sillano from Borsigliana*



## **Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial**

### **Sillano**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Sillano:

**Casavecchia, Collecchi, Corradi, Fontana, Giannotti, Santini, Talani, Vincenti**

### **Dalli Sopra**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Dalli Sopra:

**Adorni, Fontana, Mentessi, Orlandi, Rocchiccioli, Talani**

### **Dalli Sotto**

Families in Cuyahoga Heights from Dalli Sotto:

**Adorni, Angiocchi, Bertolini, Casavecchia, Collecchi, Fantelli, Fontana, Guidetti, Magistrelli,  
Mazzoni, Mentessi, Nobili, Pallini, Reali, Santini, Spelti, Talani, Tazzioli, Vincenti**

### **Capanne**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Capanne:

**Bonanni, Guidetti, Talani**

### **Metello**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Metello:

**Iacopucci**

### **Giuncugnano**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Giuncugnano:

**Amari, Billi, Contipelli, Costa, Nobili, Reali**

### **Magliano**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Magliano:

**Amari, Danti, Magliano**

### **Borsigliana**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Borsigliano:

**Mentessi, Pellini**

### **Nicciano**

Cuyahoga Heights Families from Nicciano:

**Bacci, Rossi**



## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

The main building on Ellis Island was opened on December 17, 1900, after a fire had destroyed the original wooden building in 1897. That building was constructed for the opening of Ellis Island on New Year's Day, 1892. Two years earlier, this site had been chosen as an immigrant receiving station to replace Castle Garden on the southern tip of Manhattan, which had been operating since 1855.

As the immigrants landed from the barge, they were tagged with a number that corresponded to their number on the ship's passenger list. They were led into the main building where their baggage was inspected. They were then led up a stairway where inspectors watched them looking for signs of defects or other problems. They got a chalk mark that noted any observations. After medical exams, the newcomers were told to stay in the waiting area. A registry clerk called up one group at a time. These clerks were dressed in military-style uniforms and frightened many of the immigrants. They would ask the newcomers many questions. They then waited to have their names called so that they might leave the island. Some would have to wait until their husband or other relative came to pick them up. For those that were detained, they would sit and wait. The men and women were kept separated and were allowed visits to the roof garden. Many aid societies helped occupy their time. Once they were allowed to leave, they were taken to the money exchange where they traded their foreign currency. After that they were escorted to ferries that would take them to other transportation, leading to their final destinations. An excellent book on the search for Italian ancestors is *Dances With Luigi* by Paul Paolicelli.

•

### The Towns the Italians of Cuyahoga Heights Emigrated From

#### Dalli Sotto | Dalli Sopra

Comune di Sillano, Provincia di Lucca, Tuscany, Italy

Dalli Sotto and Dalli Sopra had a total of 1,676 inhabitants, according to the official census of December 31, 1871. There were castles in Dalli Sotto and Dalli Sopra. One sixth of the population emigrated annually, leaving to work in Corsica and in the Sardinia. The area produced 480 head of cattle, 5,370 sheep and goats. These animals were used to produce large amounts of kidskin, butter, cheese and wool. The forests produced immense riches and were well conserved. Area chestnut trees not only provided its fruit, but also the wood which was used to make tables and other furniture.

The forests border the Reggiana Province, as pastures were needed in the Tuscany province. In 1812, the area had two elementary schools with 30 scholars, and today 150 pupils altogether. Dalli Sopra consists of 23 houses with as many families, with 116 inhabitants. Dalli Sotto has 60 united houses and two separated, with 58 families in the town and two just outside of town, there are 298 inhabitants. Dalli Sopra is four kilometers away from Sillano and Dalli Sotto is three kilometers away from Sillano.

## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

### Campanne

Comune di Sillano, Provincia di Lucca, Tuscany, Italy

**Campanne** is not set out as one town, but rather, there are several scattered houses. Some are old, and others are new and quite pretty but don't have any particular type of style. In the outskirts towards the north, there are several prefabricated homes, all exactly the same. Despite being 1,000 meters above sea level, it is definitely not in a panoramic position, as it lies in a basin completely surrounded by wooded slopes. The Pradarena Pass is a few kilometers away and is one of the highest that cross the Apennine crest, connecting Tuscany with Emilia.

In a trip that Vilma Talani-Fontana took to Dalli Sotto in 1998, she stayed at the Hotel Florida in Sillano, the larger city further down the mountain from Dalli Sotto. It is eight miles up the mountain from Sillano to Dalli Sotto. Vilma was going to use a taxi to get from Sillano to Dalli Sotto, but the taxi never came, so they walked to Dalli Sotto. She thought that she would show her children where the ladies used to do their wash and took them to the spot only to find two ladies doing their wash in a stone basin with a hand pump in it. She said that much of today's Dalli Sotto has electricity and water, but the people do not have washing machines yet. She then thought that she'd show her children where the ladies used to bake their bread and took them to the spot only to find a lady baking bread in a huge oven.

Early in this century, the ladies would take turns at the oven, doing their baking every other day. Vilma and her children then continued into Dalli Sotto and two ladies were talking to each other from their windows. One called to Vilma and said "Hello Vilma Talani—how are you?" They had not seen her since the 1930s but knew just who she was in 1998. In the 1930s, when Vilma was a child living there, they would sleep on mattresses stuffed with leaves. Dalli Sotto had a chestnut mill, and people from surrounding towns would bring their chestnuts there to grind them. Dalli Sopra and Dalli Sotto had a vegetable market, but if the residents wanted to buy anything else, they would have to walk to Sillano. Mules and wagons were used to transport vegetables to markets that are still in use. Today, younger people favor smaller cars, but most use scooters to get around. Vilma suggested that it is tough to drive a car in Italy. She said that the drivers are "wild" and that it's tough to drive a car up the mountain to Dalli Sotto and Dalli Sopra because the winding roads are only one lane wide. The local people know when to honk their horn as they approach a bend, so that they don't hit an oncoming car.

Meals are an important part of the Italian's lives. Everyone is together for dinner, afterwards the younger people go to a bar in Sillano. The closest hospital to Dalli Sotto is in Pisa. Vilma also said that some of the residents of Dalli Sotto today are self-sufficient and don't work. They have their pensions from the government and free healthcare. Most of the younger people work in Pisa or Florence and leave home at 3:00 a.m. to get to work and then come home in the evening. The younger people are learning that there are more job opportunities in the larger cities and are leaving Dalli Sotto, but the older folks remain there. There is a man living in Dalli Sotto today (Vilma cannot remember his name) that lived in Cuyahoga Heights, Ohio, and returned to Dalli Sotto. He has a son who is a priest and a daughter who is a nun. He was happy to talk with Vilma since it had been so long since he spoke English with anyone.



*Dalli Sopra as seen from Dalli Sotto*



*Dalli Sotto*



*Capanne*



*Church in Metello*



## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

Virginia Fontana also wrote about her trip with Vilma. “The Hotel Florida in Sillano is actually cheap to stay at. It is a two-star, tourist class motel. All that means is that it doesn’t have a phone in the room and some rooms share a communal shower and bathroom—like a bed and breakfast setup. We had a bathroom in our room. Also, they are not as secure as Americans would be used to. The lock to the door was opened with a brass key that you put in the keyhole. You could look through the keyhole and see our luggage. But I don't think crime is a big problem in Sillano. Everyone there was really old and mellow. It was very comfortable.

There were women in the kitchen all day cooking and we could ask for anything we wanted and they would fix it for us. The food was fantastic. And, the view from our veranda was priceless. Here is the amazing thing: we figured it was going to be about \$53.00 per night American dollars as our guidebook said. We were there for five nights. Plus, we thought food would be extra on top of the room charge. So, we figured about \$90-100 each plus the meals. Well, they charged us about \$100 or less for the whole stay for all three of us! We were floored! They even drove us around a couple of times, once to get us back to the train station in Piazza al Serchio! They knew we were up there looking for relatives and probably figured that we were related to them in some roundabout way so they gave us a great deal. It is entirely affordable to go to Italy if you are prepared to live like the rest of the Italians.

Many of the people on our original two-week tour were very uncomfortable and complained a lot about water pressure, and bidets, and meager amenities. I loved it! Claudia and I were on a quest to find our “birth dirt”, our paesanos, our heritage. The picture of the farm that I posted online was taken as we were lying on our backs on the side of a hill. We were in heaven. She took some Dalli Sotto dirt in a jar; I took a piece of white stone—I guess it was marble.”

### Research in Dalli Sotto

The Dalli Sotto church archive for the Church of San Michele is in the Church of Dalli Sopra. Rino Mazzoni had the key to the church. In the Church of Dalli Sopra where the archive is, they have no light in the little room where documents are kept. Giulio Salemme, a researcher hired by Laura Hine, went into the church but there was not much light there either. The records were very good though and started from 1580. Giulio said that it was a pity that the priest only goes there on Sunday. The room was dirty and dark and there is no one to take care of the archive. Giulio Salemme was unable to visit the Church of Dalli Sotto as it is open only on Sunday, but records and documents are all in Dalli Sopra. The Pallini records are in the Church of Borsigliana. The church of Dalli Sotto is in the village, the same for the one in Dalli Sopra. Other records may be in the Church of Sillano, as many people from Dalli went to live in Sillano or married in different villages and each village has a church.

The other sources that Giulio used were in Lucca. Since there are too many people with the same surnames (especially in the past), he went to Lucca to sort out all the different family lineages using the 1809 census records for the Church of San Michele.



## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

### **Metello**

Comune di Sillano, Provincia di Lucca, Tuscany, Italy

**Metello** consists of a small group of quite anonymous houses which stand almost in contact with the last houses of Brica. The monument dedicated to the war victims is unusual and bizarre, the main element is an enormous imitation rock (in concrete) painted white. This is interesting because one wonders, would it be necessary to use an imitation rock when there are more than enough real rocks in Garfagnana?

### **Giuncugnano**

Comune di Giuncugnano, Provincia di Lucca, Tuscany, Italy

**Giuncugnano** lies in a high position in the territory of the Garfagnana area. It is 834 meters above sea level. It is known for its extensive woodland, large pastures and numerous cultivated areas. The economy is strictly based on agriculture. The village of Giuncugnano itself is situated along a gentle slope of cultivated farmland. The little church with the Baroque façade is charming. In the lower part there's an interesting building, at the moment in poor condition, which is distinguished by some unusual types of architecture. It looks out onto a large courtyard with a beautiful portico. Due to its position, and also by being surrounded by thick and rich wooded vegetation, the village of Giuncugnano developed along the centuries in an isolated condition that did not allow the town the privileges granted to other localities of the Garfagnana area. An official document dating back to the 8th century testifies the presence of numerous little rural villages. Since the beginning, the community of Giuncugnano lived off the wooded resources from which abundant wood and food came. Until the beginning of the 11th century the whole area was dominated by the Lombards, after whom the powerful city of Lucca succeeded.

### **Magliano**

Comune di Giuncugnano, Provincia di Lucca, Tuscany, Italy

**Magliano** is a farm settlement of old buildings with handsome portals denoting a classic architectural style beside the more modern parts with the houses spread out here and there.



*Piazza al Serchio*



*Nicciano*



*Borsigliana Church*



*Magliano*



## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

### **An Immigrant Family Story: Vincenzo and Aldegonda Rossi Bacci**

Vincenzo Gemignano Bacci born January 31, 1896. He married Aldegonda Ida Guilia Rossi in Piazza al Serchio on January 31, 1920, it appears, on his birthday. They left their homes and family in Nicciano, Massa, traveling from the Port of Genoa. They arrived aboard the *Regina d' Italia*, April 30, 1920 at the Port of New York, Ellis Island. Naturalization papers indicate Vincenzo became a citizen September 14, 1934. His voter registration card was recorded on September 25, 1934.

The couple stayed in Independence, Ohio with Aldegonda's sister, Christina Rossi Pasqualetti and her husband John, until they were able to acquire and build their modest home at 4933 East 72nd Place. Vincenzo and Aldegonda had three children: Mary Bacci Dycus, Anne Bacci Tallon and Louis Vincent. All graduated from Cuyahoga Heights School.

Vincenzo worked at the brickyards for some time then was hired to work at the Southerly Wastewater Treatment Plant. He worked there until retirement. Of course, as was the norm in those days, Vincenzo was a member of the Toscana Club—a men's organization in the village. Aldegonda passed on April 8, 1962. Vincenzo died March 20, 1980.

Son, Louis Vincent, at age 17 or thereabouts, reportedly dug out the area under his father's garage at 4933 East 72nd Place and built a four room apartment which exists today. In the early years, Louis, Lillian, Charlotte, Louis Jr. and Laura all occupied this tiny, under the garage apartment. Three children slept in a double bed, Louis and Lillian pulled out a hide-a-bed every evening and when John Vincent arrived—he slept in a bassinet. The time had come for a move and that was to 4974 East 49th Street.

There was another baby born March 2, 1949, John Louis Bacci, who lived only a few days and is buried in Calvary Cemetery.

Louis Vincent married Lillian Mae Schreiber Bacci two times. An application for a marriage license dated April 5, 1946 sets up an examination for April 10, 1946. The couple was first married on April 11, 1946 at Zion Lutheran Church. John Palagi was a witness. The name of the female witness appears to be Winifred Urban. Somewhere along the line, the story is Grandma Bacci demanded they be married in the Catholic Church at Holy Name. The second wedding took place at Holy Name Church on March 28, 1947, almost a year later. John Palagi and Corine Contipelli witnessed this service. In trying to determine why it took 11 months to have the Catholic wedding, it may have had to do with Louis entering the military.

In the ensuing years, the children were told that Grandma Bacci also required Lillian to sign a document that all children would be raised in the Catholic faith, baptized, communed and confirmed as well. Jack Michael Bacci, born long after grandma had passed, was raised in the Lutheran faith as Lillian wanted.

Lillian was born May 17, 1928 to farmer Edwin Schreiber and Alta Prouty Schreiber of Valley View. She graduated from Cuyahoga Heights High School. Schreiber Road is named after the family as they held quite a bit of land on the road.

Louis John Vincent was born October 16, 1926, served in both the Army Air Corps and the Merchant Marine. Army discharge papers show discharge dates of May 21, 1946 and February 5, 1947. Records for the United States Merchant Marine have not yet been found. Louis received his Honor Roll recognition from Mayor Isaac G. Kennedy and the Square Deal Party, October 1, 1945.



# Certificate of Citizenship

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

TO BE GIVEN TO  
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. **3863626**

**CERTIFICATE OF  
CITIZENSHIP**

Petition No. 49756

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age 38 years, sex male, color white,  
complexion fair, color of eyes brown, color of hair black, height 5 feet 8 inches,  
weight 145 pounds, visible distinctive marks none  
Marital status married, race none, former nationality Italy

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

**ORIGINAL**

PAPERS RECORDED  
9-25-34  
BOARD OF ELECTIONS  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

  
Vincenzo Bacci  
Seal


**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA** ss:  
Northern District of Ohio  
Best known as Vincenzo Bacci  
then residing at 4933 East 72nd Place, Cleveland, Ohio  
having petitioned to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, and at  
a term of the Northern District of Ohio Court of The United States  
Cleveland, Ohio held pursuant to law at  
Sept 14 1934  
the court having found that the petitioner intends to reside permanently in the  
United States had in all respects complied with the Naturalization Laws of the United  
States in such case applicable and was entitled to be so admitted the court thereupon  
ordered that the petitioner be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.  
In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 14  
day of Sept. in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and  
and four Independence the one hundred

F. J. Denzler  
Clerk of the US District Court.  
Deputy Clerk.

WARNING—ALTERATION, ADDITION OR MUTILATION OF LETTERS IS PROHIBITED.  
Any Unofficial Change Will Render This Passport Invalid.

NAME VINCENZO BACCI NATION ITALY SEX BROWN  
BIRTH DATE JAN. 31, 1896 RACE GREY ISSUE DATE MARCH 25, 1967  
AGE 5 FEET 8 INCHES  
SEX X X X PASSPORT RENEWAL  
SEX X X X

Vincenzo Bacci  
THIS PASSPORT EXPIRES THREE YEARS FROM ISSUE DATE.  
IF RENEWED, IT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM ISSUE DATE.

  
13. U.S. IMMIGRATION  
NEW YORK, N. Y. 100  
SEP 26 1967  
ADMITTED (CLASS)  
MONTH

RECORDED 9-26-34 BOARD OF ELECTIONS  
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS IS A CORRECT TRANSCRIPT OF THE  
NATURALIZATION CERTIFICATE OF  
NAME Vincenzo Bacci OFFICE NO. 102007  
SUBJECT OF Italy SIGNATURE OF HOLDER  
COUNTY W.S. Dist NATURALIZED 9-14-1934  
CITY Cleveland  
STATE Ohio  
AGE WHEN NATURALIZED 38  
AGE WHEN RECORDED 38  
CONTAINS SIGNATURE FOR IDENTIFICATION

Passport and  
Voter Registration



## Marriage Certificate



## Bacci Family in 1948

Vincenzo, Louis (standing) Lillian and Aldegonda. Charlotte is on Lillian's lap.



## Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial

### **Welcome to America!**

A humorous story was related to Vincenzo's grandchildren by second cousin, Augusta "Coke," Pasqualetti Perozeni. She recalled that Vincenzo was told not to come to America until advised by the Pasqualettis. Being of an Italian nature, he did not listen and arrived with Aldegonda unexpectedly at the home of the Pasqualettis on old Brecksville Road in Independence. The building was an old schoolhouse repurposed into two apartments located next to the former site of Broglio's Restaurant.

Well, there was no place for them to stay—so they were relegated to stay in the barn. Of course, Vincenzo was outraged and that Italian temper showed more than anyone would like to say.