

Italian Americans in Wellesley (1/20/21)

The story about Wellesley's Italian-Americans has never been written. What we have are fragments...usually a newspaper article, thesis, documents or news releases. In them we see an interesting part of Wellesley's history unfold. In the following collection covering ninety years of highlights, you are offered a window into the Italian-American community, an unknown and often under-appreciated part of Wellesley's history. For sake of organizing, these items are presented in chronological order and they cover many aspects of interest. I'm sure there may be more bits of information out there. Our appreciation goes to all contributors for their interest and dedication including the Wellesley Historical Society, The Wellesley Townsman and others interested in the Italian community. Dr. Tosiello summarized our understanding of Italian-Americans in Wellesley when he accurately described the community: "*By their physical labors they helped build cities and towns. By their presence they contributed to the diversity of this society. By their values and families they helped shape the ethos of the United States.*" (M)

Salvatore (Tory) DeFazio III
Past-President & Honorary Director, Wellesley Historical Society

Note for users: The following document contains transcriptions from a variety of source material. Where digital access to the original source material exists, links have been provided.

Townsman articles dating between 1906 and 1989 can be accessed online through the Wellesley Free Library: [Wellesley Townsman](#)

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- A) “Reliance Club Dedication: Town and State Officials Present”, *Townsmen*; February 27, 1925, Page 1

“Town and State were well represented at the dedication of the new Reliance club house on Clifford Street, Wellesley, Monday of this week the speakers for the occasion were: Ex-Senator Cassasa of Revere, H. R. Gary, chairman of the board of Selectmen of Wellesley, Charles N. Taylor, president of the Wellesley National Bank and Isaac Sprague, Jr.

The dedication of this new building means much to Wellesley, the members of the Reliance Club for nearly eight years, in temporary quarters, have saved for their building fund, and with the completion of this new home the first of February, their goal was realized.

Dedication ceremonies started at ten o'clock, Monday morning. President Frank Gallerani presiding and giving the speech of introduction in which he outlined the purposes and aims of the Reliance Club. He then introduced selectman H. R. Gary who spoke of his interest in the club, his pleasure in its advance to its present position and of the good it was capable of doing the Italian residents of Wellesley. Mr. Charles N. Taylor, the next speaker told how highly Wellesley's Italian residents were rated at the Wellesley bank. With a few pleasantries and good wishes for the welfare of the organization Mr. Taylor closed his remarks to be followed by Isaac Sprague, Jr., who was then introduced. Mr. Sprague stated that he was deeply interested in the future development of the club. He remarked on the growth of the Maugus Club at Wellesley Hills of which he is a charter member, of its success and wished that the Reliance Club might have a parallel rise as it deserves on the principles for which it was founded.

As ex-Senator Cassasa, the next speaker scheduled had not arrived, Geo. Sweetser of Wellesley Hills, attorney for the Club was introduced. Mr. Sweetser told of the Club's bylaws and outlined its future as the members purposed.

Flag raising was next on the program, a beautiful American Flag having been presented by A. Gavoni, a charter member of the club. Mr. Gavoni held the flag as the President hoisted it to full mast. The Star Spangled Banner and the taps were played by Wellesley's Italian band as the guests stood with hats off.

Ex. Senator Cassassa having been belated, was introduced and the message on Americanization which he brought and of the service to country was received with much acclaim.

A smoke talk was enjoyed in the afternoon and the evening was devoted to dancing by club members and their families, a full and happy day closing well late the night.

The Reliance Club

The Reliance club home which was dedicated on Monday is a large stucco building of pleasing appearance with a "hip roof." There is a pool room, reading room, large hall and bocci alley (bocci is an Italian game very similar to bowling.) In the basement is an additional pool room and lockers.

The Reliance club was started by a group of Italian citizens in 1918 for Educational and social purposes. It has grown, since that start with but a small enrollment, to a membership of 74 at the present time. Its aims are to teach uneducated Italians to read and write; to teach them the history of the country of their adoption; to teach them the "why" of naturalization, to allow them how to become naturalized and how to become better citizens. With eight years behind it and growing every year this fine club should have a bright future and succeed in doing a great good.

The officers of the Reliance club are as follows: President, Frank R. Gallerani; Vice-President, Charles Zoletti; Secretary, A. Colina; Treasurer, B Simoni."

(Ed. Note: The Reliance Club property was purchased from Caesar and Alfonsina Tangerini on June 6, 1923. It closed and was sold on June 3, 1997 for \$237,000. - Salvatore (Tory) DeFazio III)

- B)** "Italian Civic League is Now Incorporated: Wellesley Group forms Organization for the Advancement of Members", *Townsmen*; May 4, 1934, Page 1

"The Wellesley Italian Civic League received this week from the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts its certificate of incorporation entitling it to powers, rights and privileges subject to the limitations, duties and restrictions which by law appertain thereto.

Those who are responsible for the founding of this League are Guyton Vaccari, Alfredo A. Todesco, Salvatore DeFazio, Jr. Jerome DiTiberio, Hamlet Collina, Neno A. Malaguti, Cosmo Dischino, Damiano Z. Dischino, Alberico Alberice, Renato Bucci, Mario DeFazio and Frank Paul Piazza.

The purpose of the League is to unite all those of Italian descent residing in Wellesley into a homogenous compact group for the advancement of themselves and the community by promoting civic interest, secure naturalization for those not already citizens, promote welfare and charity among the Italians and foster the glories and traditions of the Italian history and literature.

The officers of the League are Guyton Vaccari, President; Jerome DiTiberio, Vice-President; Salvatore DeFazio, Jr., Secretary, and Alfred A. Todesco, Treasurer. The Board of Directors includes Dante Gozzi, chairman; Hamlet Collina, assistant chairman; Daniel Dischino, Neno A. Malaguti and Vincent Schiavina.

A cordial invitation is extended to all Italians living in Wellesley to join this newly incorporated League."

(Ed. Note: In 1936, the League joined the Italian American Citizens Club to form the Italo-American Educational Club, Inc. now on Oak Street. - Salvatore (Tory) DeFazio III)

- C) "Alfred Todesco Began Shoe Repairing Half Century Ago", Margaret Urann, *Townsmen*; March 23, 1961, Page 3

"A familiar figure in Wellesley Square for over 50 years, Alfred A. Todesco of 39 Atwood Street continues to this day the shoe repair business he bought from his prospective father-in-law, John Ardolino, before he reached the age of 18.

Born in Avellino, Italy, one of seven children, Mr. Todesco learned the trade from his father, Anthony, prior to his departure for America in 1908 when he was 16.

On arrival he lived in Framingham with a brother, Joseph, who had established himself there as a barber. While there Alfred worked at the R. H. Long shoe factory, now used as headquarters of the R. H. Long Motor Sales Company. (This firm is now operated by Richard H. Long's son, Charles F. Long. A granddaughter, Dorothy Long Palmer, is the wife of Blake K. Palmer, who operates the company's dealership in Wellesley."

After a few months at the factory, Mr. Todesco came to Wellesley to work in the shoe repair shop of John Ardolino, who lived on Middlesex Street. The shop was located in the Shaw Block (consisting of two stores and an upstairs apartment) on the north side of Wellesley Square next to the Shattuck Block. (The westerly store, used first as a meat market, was occupied by several fruit dealers prior to the establishment of the Wellesley Fruit Company in 1912. This business continued for at least 45 years. The other store's first occupant was a barber, F. O. Cripps, who was followed by the Wellesley Shoe Store operated by Lucius A. Kinnear of Brook Street. Mr. Kinnear sold out to John Ardolino.

Buys Business

Within a year's time Alfred Todesco had acquired Mr. Ardolino's business in his own right, and five years later he married Esther Ardolino, a daughter of his former boss. During World War I Mr. Todesco served with the armed forces in Europe. Receiving his United States citizenship in 1927, he celebrated by running for Selectman against Patrick J. Fitzpatrick.

He moved to his present quarters at 542 Washington Street, on the opposite side of Wellesley Square, around 1931 when the Wellesley Fruit Company was about to tear down the small building and erect the present more spacious block. Through the years he has had a succession of helpers, generally two at a time until the era of World War II proved that few young men were interested in his trade. Some of his former assistants who learned the business from him, now have shops of their own. Among them is Bob Impallaria of Bow Street in the Lower Falls area of Wellesley.

Meanwhile, around the corner in the Grove Street part of the Shattuck Block, Jimmy Cassano had started his shoe repair shop in 1904. Before many years had elapsed, Mr. Cassano and Mr. Todesco became brothers-in-law, each having married a daughter of Mr. Ardolino. Jimmy Cassano sold his business in 1922 to Charles Alexander who continues in the same building to the present and the former then devoted all his time to his second shop in Framingham, where he is still active after 57 years in the trade. Mrs. Adeline Cassano and Mrs. Esther Todesco are now both deceased.

It is a family tradition that an uncle of Esther Todesco, namely Charles Ardolino of Middlesex Street, was the first customer of the Wellesley National Bank when it opened in the Taylor block in 1904; his deposit of \$1,000 on the first day was a sizeable "nest egg" for those times. Another uncle, Edward Ardolino, donated designs for the reconstruction of the Wellesley Congregational Church after the wooden structure had been destroyed by fire in 1916, and he gave \$1,000 toward the present brick edifice built according to his plans. Well known for his expert stone carvings, some of which adorn buildings on the Wellesley

College campus, Edward Ardolino did some of the stone designs on St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York when it was remodeled. Today his son Edward Ardolino, Jr. carries on the New York business.

As the Todesco family was very "closely knit," Mr. Todesco's five children were most concerned for his welfare after the death of their mother in 1940. However, it turned out that his friends were "legion", as the saying goes, and he has never failed for companionship. Besides, he has been active in many community affairs over a long period, in addition to his shoe repair work and footwear dealership.

Community Interests

Mr. Todesco is past commander of the Framingham post, Italian-American World War Veterans of the United States, which he now serves as senior vice commander and veteran counselor. He is a charter member of the Italo-American Educational Club of Wellesley. He has been a Town Meeting Member ever since the beginning of that form of government in 1936, and a registered Notary Public since 1932. He was a steamship agent for over a decade, and he is now a dealer for quite a line of footwear.

Always a friend of the needy, Mr. Todesco has taken many a man home with him for supper and a night's lodging and then found him a job. During the depression years of the 1930's he worked with the late Rev. Edward Dunne and the late Rev. Ambrose Dore of St. Paul's in an effort to supply shoes for impoverished persons throughout the community as well as in his parish.

His supreme hobby is the art of Italian cookery, which he proudly taught to his four daughters-in-law. He has always had a vegetable garden at his home on Atwood Street, where he has resided for nearly 45 years. Although living alone, he keeps in close touch with all members of his family. These include his brother, Joe, now retired in Framingham, and a sister, Mrs. Angelino De Cristoforo, in Revere. Another brother, Archie, now deceased, lived in East Boston. His second sister and two other brothers remained in Italy, where only one brother survives. He is related to Judge Vincent Mottola of Boston, who is a frequent visitor at his home.

His only daughter, Eleanor (now Mrs. Daniel Evans), continues to live in Wellesley, as do two of his four sons: Charles, a Lieutenant in the Wellesley Fire Department, and Arthur, a self-employed public accountant. Anthony is a sales representative of American Thread Company in Newington, Conn., while Fred is a school supply salesman who resides in Medfield. Mr. Todesco's pride in his children is excelled only by his delight in having 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Their friends are his friends, over and above his contemporaries.

Throughout the half century of his career in Wellesley, Mr. Todesco has served countless students as well as townspeople and even the famous persons who found their way to his shop are now too numerous to recall. Some of these have been the actors and actresses appearing at Wellesley Summer Theater on the Green, which has often looked to him for the supply of props. He occasionally loans boots, shoes and supplies to students at Wellesley College and Dana Hall for use as models in their art courses. Right now he is missing a shoe belonging to one of his sons. He is certain that it will turn up some day- although he has no idea who borrowed it!"

D) “Alfred Todesco Retires After 54 Years Here”, Margaret Urann, *Townsman*; October 11, 1962, Page 32

“A familiar figure in Wellesley Square for over half a century, Alfred Todesco has closed his shoe repair shop at 542 Washington street; he will continue to reside at 39 Atwood Street, his home for nearly 45 years.

It was the business he had acquired in 1909 from John Ardolino, his prospective father-in-law, whose daughter Esther he married five years later. His shop had been located at the above address for 30 years but was formerly across the square.

Mr. Todesco came to Wellesley to work for Mr. Ardolino in 1908, within a few months after arriving in the United States at the age of 16. A native of Avellino, Italy, he had joined a brother, Joseph Todesco, in Framingham and at first worked in a factory there. Within a year after entering Mr. Ardolino’s employ, he had taken over the shop that was then located in the two-story Shaw Building (next to the Shattuck Block).

During World War I Mr. Todesco served with the armed forces in Europe. A decade later, in 1927, he celebrated receipt of his citizenship by running for the office of Selectman against Patrick J. Fitzpatrick. In addition to his shoe repair work, he conducted a footwear dealership and was a steamship agent for some years.

Always interested in community affairs, he was a charter member of the Italo-American Educational Club on Oak Street. He has been a Town Meeting Member from the beginning of that form of government in 1936, and was a registered Notary Public from 1932. He is past commander of the Framingham Post, Italian-American World War Veterans of the United States which he has long served as senior vice commander and veteran counselor

Mr. Todesco continues to follow his supreme hobby, that of Italian cookery, which he taught to his four daughters-in-law. His children marvel at the ease with which he keeps the large family closely together over the dinner table as always. His only daughter, Eleanor (now Mrs. Daniel Evans), continues to live in Wellesley, as do two of his four sons: Charles, a Lieutenant in the Wellesley Fire Department; and Arthur, a self-employed public accountant. Anthony is a sales representative of American Thread Company in Newington, Conn., and Fred is a school supply salesman who lives in Medfield. Mr. Todesco’s 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren will receive more attention than ever, now that he is retired, as will his legion of friends.”

E) “Italo-American Educational Club Celebrates 30th Anniversary”, Ed Powers, *Townsman*; November 3, 1966, Page 22

“The Italo-American Educational club of Wellesley marked its third decade as one of the Towns’ leading civic organizations with a gala birthday celebration held at the Club spacious quarters at 80 Oak St. with over 700 members and guests in attendance. This fraternal organization is famed for its stellar social events, but this celebration marking a milestone in the Club’s history will always be an affair to be remembered.

The high esteem this group enjoys was evident by the presence of some of the leading civic officials representing the Commonwealth and town who joined in helping to celebrate the occasion. Headlining these distinguished guests were: Felix Juliani, Chairman of the Board of Selectman; Mr. John Griffin,

former Executive Secretary, Wellesley Board of Selectmen; Mr. Everett R. Kennedy, Supt. Of Public Works and many other leading lights too numerous to include all their names.

In addition to the celebration, the affair proved to be a Home-Coming event for many former members and friends of the Italo Club who travelled from fields afar to take part in the festivities.

The Committee under the direction of President Amos Amalfi and Bruno Mortarelli spared no effort in making this occasion one of the most spectacular occasions in the club's history. Assisting in their efforts were Joe Pini, Hugo Marulli and John Battaglia who were responsible for the staging of the sumptuous Smorgasbord which would have delighted the most fastidious Swedish epicure.

Many prominent figures of the Italo-American Club were singularly honored during the evening. President Amos Amalfi introduced many of the Past Presidents and other personages who helped weld the organization throughout the years. The key roles these gentlemen played in making the Italo-American Educational Club into one of the leading organizations of its kind in the country is related in the following history of the Club's glittering achievements and civic accomplishments since its founding in 1936.

The Italo-American Story – A Cause for Celebration

The history of the Italo-American Club begins when the written record starts – which was back in 1934 when the amalgamation of two distinct Italian Clubs formed an organization which is now known as the Italo-American Educational Club, Inc. The main force behind this re-organization proved to be the Italian American Citizens Club and the Italian Civic Club. Each club formed a Committee of six men and after several meetings agreed to combine the fortunes of each group and form the present organization.

The initial meeting of the new group took place at 160 Linden St. (now Larry's Barber Shop) and subsequent meetings were held at the Chapel Building – a structure still standing at the rear of the Taylor Block. Prior to the construction of its permanent home many meetings were conducted at member's homes, prominent among these meetings were those held at the Gubellini home on Oak St.

The organizational and administrative work and details performed by the incorporators from both groups was outstanding. During the two years of laborious organization, these dedicated men, despite working in the throes of a depression, carved out the framework of an association which 30 years later had become a landmark in their beloved community. The number of members enrolled at the time of the registering of the charter comprised a total of 200 men. Today that total amounts to 282 paid up members plus 140 members of the Women's Auxiliary.

The Founding Fathers

The formation of any organization involves group effort at all levels and the founders of this new group were no exception. Determined to sponsor a unit which would take a place of honor among the community civic associations, they spared no expense or effort to accomplish this end. The Italian Community can now point with pride not only to their beautiful edifice erected on Oak St. but to a period of over thirty years of service to the community.

Mr. Peter Amalfi, the first President of the Italo-American club, devoted over 30 years of this life in fulfilling his ambition to see a dream come true. This dedicated man served five full terms as the group's leader and his contributions to the Italo-American community can never be truly assessed. A prominent charter member is Mr. Secondo Cremoni, whose hard work and devotion to the cause helped immeasurably in the early days. Every group has its own tub-thumper – a man whose enthusiasm generates his co-workers and manages to instill a esprit-de-corps among all men. Such a man was

Dominic (Mickey) Marengi, a charter member and subsequent President. Mickey was instrumental in the formation chiefly by his constant requests to Mr. Amalfi for the organization of the Italo-American Club in Wellesley. The group owes a great deal to Mr. Marengi not only for his persuasiveness but also for his time and effort in drawing up the By-Laws which now govern the destinies of the group. A special salute from all the members past and present is due to Mr. J. Haller Ramsey, a prominent resident of the Town, who gave unstintingly of his time during these initial days of re-organization.

Mr. Bruno Mortarelli, a charter member and a two term President, has also devoted over thirty-years in promoting goodwill for his Association. Mr. Mortarelli had the distinct honor of introducing the late President Kennedy when he appeared at the Club House in 1952. Mr. Kennedy was at that time running for the Senate. Other outstanding contributors to the Club's success were Dan Juliani, the long-time treasurer who also drew up the plans for new building; Larry Balboni, the first Secretary of the Club; the late Joseph Zanoni who served for 10 years as Sec.-Treasurer; Anthony Boardi, long-time Trustee and Azedo Paltrineri, the social director of the Italo-American Club for many years.

However, it should be pointed out that these men could not have enjoyed the success they achieved without the whole-hearted cooperation of the entire membership. As Mr. Amos Amalfi, the present president pointed out, "The success of the Italo-American Club is due chiefly to a team effort – it would be an impossibility for one individual to accomplish the amount of work required for this organization."

Community Projects

The word educational in the Club's title is no misnomer – for one of the chief functions of its members, especially during the early days, was the training and assisting of Italian immigrants in becoming citizens and taking their place in community life. This function is now in the domain of the school system, but the remarkable contribution made by the Italo Club in this field has resulted in the addition of many outstanding citizens who have added so much to the civic and cultural progress of the Town.

Any activity in the Youth Movement has always had the complete support of the organization, especially the Boy Scouts of America. The members were instrumental in initiating the Scout Exchange idea between this country and Italy.

The disastrous flood condition which inundated the Po Valley in Italy generated the members into instant action which resulted in the staging of many dances and benefits for the unfortunate victims of the flood. A special Fund has been set aside for the Italian version of Boys Town located in central Italy. Funds are allocated for the education and training for homeless orphans. As long as the need exists, the Club acts – when a new press box was needed for Hunnewell, the members contributed handsomely toward its construction. The Italo-American Club has always played a key role in any community effort. The record stands as an example in civic pride and community betterment.

Italo's Beloved "Livia"

Behind every man there is a woman – and behind every single solitary member of the Italo Club is Mrs. Maria Gagliardi, affectionately known as "Livia." A native of Milan, Livia came upon the scene in 1948, and since then has been the Queen of all she surveys. She is a combination of house mother, chaplain and "Boss" no matter who the person is, whether a President, Trustee or the newest candidate. Livia's word is the law. This kind and understanding woman has won the hearts of all who have come in contact with her magnetic personality. The personnel have held her in so high esteem that they have provided her with an attractive apartment attached to the Club's headquarters. President Amalfi summed up the members' high

regard for her when he remarked, “Livia is the heart and soul of this Club – any other description would be superfluous.”

Be sure to read a later installment concerning Italo-American’s “new look,” the work and achievements of the Women’s Auxiliary, the social and athletic endeavors of the members and the social impact the Italo-American Club has had on the community.”

Photo Captions (see original article for images):

Image #1: “PAST AND PRESENT: Peter Amalfi, first president of Italo-American Club assists his son Amos, the present leader of the organization in cutting the birthday cake celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Club’s founding. Mr. Amalfi served five terms as president while his son Amos is now completing his sixth term of office.”

Image #2: “FOUNDING FATHERS: Charter Members of the Italo-American line up for a group picture during the organizations thirtieth birthday celebration. Left to right (first row): Charles Niccoli, Secondo Cremoni, Sam DiGiandomenico, Patsy Nicolai, Umbero Gubellini and Laz Mortarelli. Back row: Louis Alberti, Dom (Mickey) Marengi, Peter Amalfi, Bruno Mortarelli Sr., and Charles Canoni.”

Image #3: “ITALO’S FIRST LADY...Mrs. Maria Gagliardi, known to all and sundry at the Italo-American Club as “Livia” proudly poses alongside cake; which was baked especially for the occasion.”

- F) “The Italo-American Club: A Community Landmark”, Ed Powers, *Townsmen*; November 10, 1966, Page 17

“Ed. Note: The following article is the second of a series describing the founding of the Italo-American Educational club. We would like to point out that these articles briefly describe the history of this well-known organization. However, a complete and comprehensive history is in its initial stages and will be presented to the Trustees upon completion.

The groundwork for the establishment of the Italo-American club of Wellesley was the result of diligent effort and sheer determination on the part of the incorporators and charter members. A critical period of three years was devoted to fund raising, research, organizational work and despite the labor involved amidst a depression that engulfed the nation, this dedicated group organized one of the most influential Italian-American Associations in the Northeast region.

An individual whose courage and fortitude encouraged the members in the planning of the new structure was Mr. Richard Boiardi, the President whose personal drive in selling bonds and exhorting all to the maximum effort resulted in the construction of the first segment of the structure which now stands at 80 Oak St. Mr. Boiardi’s dream was fulfilled in 1939 when the building was dedicated at ceremonies attended by the Town officials and officers of other local organizations.

Later when the quarters proved to be inadequate for the membership, an addition was attached to the existing building on the Oak Street side of the Club’s headquarters. This addition doubled the Club’s capacity and provided the spacious auditorium where many of Wellesley’s organizations hold their various functions. There are many social organizations in and around Boston but none has the facilities to match those found at the Italo-American Club.

A personality whose service to both the community and especially to the organization whose name will always be emblazoned in the history of the Italo-American Club is the late Antonio Juliani (mistakenly

referred to as Dan Juliani in the 1st of these articles) for it was he who in addition to drawing up the preliminary plans for the first structure, actually provided the land on which the first club house was constructed. Unfortunately, Mr. Juliani passed on before the project was completed, but his wife – ever faithful to his wishes, sold the land at cost to the Italo-American Club.

The Juliani Family has made remarkable contributions to the Club's success. His son, Felix Juliani, present Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and a Trustee of Italo-American, has served the club in many capacities over the years.

The Distaff Side

The Women's Auxiliary of the Italo-American Club was organized in 1955 by the then president, Mr. Joseph Greico. The ladies, under the able direction of Mrs. Louise Binovi have performed yeoman service to the club since they were first organized. In addition to taking charge in respect to the social functions of the club they have performed invaluable social work not only in their own community but for agencies in and around Boston.

These energetic women are presently engaged in a variety of Wellesley sponsored projects such as the Wellesley Scholarship Fund, Newton-Wellesley Hospital work and many other civic projects. Their work at the Newton- Wellesley hospital has earned for them several commendations from the officials at this institution. Mrs. Binovi, with her fellow officers which include Vice-President Mrs. Louise Slamin, Mrs. Edna Marenghi, Secretary, and Mrs. Dolly Amalfi, Treasurer, have arranged a social program that embraces many charitable drives in the Town of Wellesley and Greater Boston. In addition to their work in the Foreign Exchange Students Projects, they also engage in extensive projects which includes work with the American Field Service, the Italian Home for Children, the Kennedy Memorial Foundation, Veterans Hospitals, the Fernald School for Children and the Mattapan State Hospital. In respect to the work at the Mattapan State Hospital, a special commendation should be bestowed on Mrs. Edna Marenghi, a dedicated woman who has accomplished much over the years while acting as a volunteer in Mrs. Anderson's group that visited Mattapan monthly to cheer up the unfortunate inmates. Her devotion to this cause is indeed a tribute to the effectiveness of the social programs offered by the Italo-American Club to the unfortunate.

However, the girls have the social moments when they get together for a little diversion. The Ladies sponsor a Bowling League comprised 8 teams – 40 members. Rumor has it that the men don't dare to accept their challenge on the alleys, and after seeing some of the talent of the ladies – I don't blame them. The group sponsors fashion shows, food festivals, card parties, rummage sales which go a long way to defraying the expenses of their community projects.

Mrs. Angela Maccini whose outstanding administration work with the Auxiliary has proved a great boon to the Club. Her tireless work and efforts in planning the functions have greatly contributed to its success. In her summary of the Auxiliary's activities Mrs. Binovi observed: "Civic responsibility and participation is the credo of all our members. Each and every member takes part on all our community projects.

Headquarters on Oak Street

The Italo-American Club is an imposing two-story brick structure. The first floor consists of a commodious social room where members play cards and indulge in other pastimes such as pool table tennis and the Italian game of Bocci. Member take this game very seriously and if you are a beginner, you had better brush up before venturing on the new court just installed off the social room.

The second floor houses the spacious auditorium where most of the social functions take place. Many outside activities such as wedding receptions, meetings, seminars are staged in this area. The majority of these affairs take place in the beautiful new lounge which was recently constructed.

Sports Program

In addition to the intra-mural sports activity, the Italo-American Club sponsors teams in the Businessmen's Bowling League and this past summer the Italo Softball Team captured the gonfalon in the Recreation Departments' Softball league.

Social Highlights

Mrs. Perl Mesta is famous for her famous parties but I am afraid she falls far behind the Ladies Auxiliary in the staging of their annual seasonal social functions. The New Year's Celebration is an affair to be remembered – and if you don't think so, just try to get a ticket, anytime in December – even One-Eyed Connolly would have his troubles crashing the gate.

The grandest celebration of St. Patrick's Day does not take place at Hibernian Hall – it takes place in the hallowed halls of the Italo-Club when all the members add an O before their names, just for the night they all wear the green.

The Italo-American Club in the short period of thirty years can look back over the time and be justifiably proud of its accomplishments to the community and service to its members. They have witnessed the rapid rise of the Italo-American Club to its eminent position of being one of New England's most outstanding educational and social organizations. The true assessment of the Italo Club's success lies not in the number of members, the imposing building it possesses but truly in the contributions it has made to its community and to the brotherhood of man.

Table of Organizations:

Board of Directors - President, Amos Amalfi; Vice President Robert Belforti; Rec.Sec. Robert Campana; Treasurer, Frank Villa; Fin. Sec. Charles Cononi.

Trustees - Felix Juliani, Chairman; Larry Corda; John Guarnieri

Membership Committee – John Pini; Alfred Belforti; Charles Maccini; Sam D'Ortenzio; Nunzio Napoleone.

Sergeant-At-Arms – Charles Belforti; Gino Tangerini

Buyers – Bruno Mortarelli, Sr.; Louis Glorioso, Sr.”

Photo Captions (see original for images):

Photo #1: “SUMPTUOUS SMORGASBORD – Members pose behind tables in the new Lounge at the Italo-American Club. Hugo Marulli, John Battaglia and Joe Pini prepared dinner for over 700 members and guests.”

Photo #2: “ITALO'S HEADQUARTERS: The above building represents 30 years of work on the part of all members of the Italo-American Club. The first section (front entrance to the side canopied entrance) was dedicated in 1939. The addition facing Oak Street was added several years later. The left wing (urns showing on top) houses the new lounge completed last year.”

Photo #3: “TIME MARCHES ON...Bruno Mortarelli, Jr. (left) presents new clock to President Amos Amalfi at the 30th Anniversary Celebration of the Italo-American Club on Oak Street.”

Photo #4: “BOWLING?– NO BOCCI – Members of the Italo-American Club prepare to start Bocci game at the Italo-American Club. (L to r): Mario DeGiandomenico, Bruno Cordani, Peter Zani, Louis Alberti. Back Row (l to r): Don Leyland, Modesto Amalfi.”

G) “Wellesley’s Italian Communities”, Jane Pirozzolo, Privately Printed, 1976

“There is very little written information on the Italian people living in Wellesley. In fact, aside from the attached Townsman articles, I could find none. In some ways, I think that the following interviews are better substitutes. If you are interested, please turn the page and allow me to be your guide through these two little known but very special neighborhoods and acquaint you with the equally special residents who fondly call this their “home”.

“Interview: with FELIX JULIANI, at his home at 6 Sylvester Terrace, March 26, 1976

(photo: BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Seated left to right Felix Juliani, Richard L. Gardner, Edwina L. Gies and Executive Secretary, Thomas E. Lee.)

Mr Juliani is presently serving his fourth consecutive third-year term on the Board of Selectmen, is a Constable and past Planning Board member. He is also the first and only Italian ever to be elected to the Board of Selectmen.

To those living within the Greater Boston area, and to most who live outside it, “Back Bay” is as much a part of Boston as baked beans. There are probably few, however, who are aware of the existence of a smaller, much different “Back Bay” within the very same Metropolitan area. It was not without surprise that I learned from Mr. Juliani that the original Italian settlement in Wellesley, Precinct B, is and has been for years fondly referred to by its residents as “Back Bay”. Mr. Juliani did not know the reason for this “nickname.” It just seems to be a tradition. Tradition and close family structure are strong characteristics, jealously guarded, of the Italian people and it is wise, when among them, not to question either. This being the case, “tradition” remains the not unsatisfactory explanation for the naming of this Italian precinct.

Two of the seven precincts in Wellesley are Italian, Precinct B and Precinct F (see Map of Wellesley). Although there are many streets within each district that have Italian families living on them, there seem to be four streets in each section which have the heaviest concentration of Italian names. I have used these eight streets as the basis for my population and occupation studies (see pages i-x). During my interview with Mr. Juliani, the discussion revolved around the Italo-American Educational Club, Inc. which is the center of activity in Precinct B. (See folder interview, photographs, and newspaper articles.) There is also a club in Precinct F which goes by the name of The Reliance Club (see interview and photographs). According to Mr. Juliani, the reason for having two separate clubs, one in each precinct, is that Precinct B is made up of those Italians who come from the middle and southern part of Italy while Precinct F is made up of those who come from the northern part of Italy. This, to an Italian, is a very valid reason for separation. The division between these two clubs is based upon traditional friction between the different regions of Italy caused, in part, by differences in culture as well as in dialect.

The Italo-American Educational Club, Inc. was formed in 1934 when two smaller Italian organizations consolidated. The Italian American Citizens Club and the Italian Civic Club joined together with the chief

purpose of training and assisting Italian immigrants to become citizens and integrate themselves successfully into the community. The leaders of this newly formed Club took it upon themselves to see that these immigrants got the proper citizenship papers, filled them out correctly and sent them to the proper authorities. They also taught many of them to read and speak English, a fact which surely made survival in this country easier. Since that time, the Club has grown in membership and now performs a more active role in the Wellesley community. It was not legally founded until 1936 and the first section of the present Club on 80 Oak Street was not dedicated until 1939. The property on which the Club now stands was sold to the Club at cost by the wife of the late Antonio Juliani, father of Felix Juliani.

(Photo: ITALO'S HEADQUARTERS The above building represents 30 years of work on the part of all members of the Italo-American Club. The first section (front entrance to side canopied entrance) was dedicated in 1939. The addition facing Oak Street was added several years later. The left wing (urns showing on top) houses the lounge completed last year.)

A history of the Club, as reported in *The Townsman* in 1966, is on pages xi-xv, (see item **(D)**) An interview with the Club's current President, Mr. George Staffieri, is on the following pages.

One of the principal reasons that the Italian people in both districts became so tightly clustered was for the purpose of protection against the discrimination they encountered on their arrival. The strength of family ties has, since then, kept them together. An interesting aspect of the Italian culture may be seen when driving through some of the streets in each precinct. There are grape arbors in many of the yards, although they are more prevalent in Precinct B than in Precinct F. It may be that this is not unrelated to the fact that agriculture is more prevalent in the southern part of Italy. Along with the custom of grape arbors, the Italian people who came to Wellesley also brought with them their trades. The majority of these trades involved construction of some type. (See occupation study on pages vii-x). Three more common ones were, and still are, masonry (both brick and stone), plastering, and landscaping. In the center of Wellesley there is a large lumber company called Diehl's (see photos). Many of the Italian people are employed here. Diehl's is a major local supplier of lumber, garden equipment, and tools. In addition, they remodel homes and buildings. Keeping up with "the Hunnewells" would be impossible without Diehl's. But of these trades several Italian families developed and now own their own construction companies in Wellesley. The Grignaffini Construction Company is located on Pleasant Street. This company is responsible for construction of the large building at 148 Linden Street which contains offices (see photo) and also some tudor style apartments on Oak Street. The Labadini Construction Company is located on Hollis Street. Another prominent name is Epifano, who is responsible for developing part of the wealthy Cliff Estate area and is presently developing an area near Albion Road. The Rossi Construction firm deals in heavy equipment. The northern half of what is now the Wellesley Office Park off of Rt. 9 was owned by the Lamberti family of Wellesley. Mr. Lamberti's son now owns and runs Lambert's fruit stand off of Rt. 9. The Nicoli family owned what is now Ivy Road and Maurice Road and the Anthony Forti family owned the Westgate, Mansfield Road area.

It is interesting to note that in spite of all the changes that have occurred over the years, the Italian community remains relatively stable. The families are still close, the neighborhoods remain tight-knit, and the occupations are relatively unchanged. With a few exceptions, even those Italian families who could well afford to move into the Cliff Estate area have stayed within the Italian community where it is secure and comfortable and they are among friends. In Precinct B they even have what could loosely be called their own "Cumberland Farms", which goes by the name of Gubellini's. This is a small, unobtrusive, fifty-year old grocery store on Oak Street (see photo). The store is attached to a house, embellished with a large grape arbor in front, and serves the needs of the residents in much the same manner that Sunnybrook

Farm serves the residents of Wellesley Hills. At one time, before the constructions of the present Italo-American Educational Club, Inc., meetings were held in this store.

The ignorance regarding the presence of these two Italian neighborhoods in Wellesley is partly due to the fact that Italians, as a group, are a very private people and as such keep a low profile. They are active members of the community but they are no publicity seekers. It is Mr. Juliani's wish that more Italians would become involved in politics but there is a cautious reserve among these people who view political activity with suspicion. According to Mr. Juliani, they are just not interested in "getting their hands dirty." They prefer clean, honest work to politics. He quickly points out, however, that if a matter were to come up which they felt might directly, adversely affect or threaten either themselves, their family, or their friends, they would not hesitate to take action. For example, he notes that they recently voted down a referendum to make additions to the Wellesley High School which they felt would unnecessarily increase their tax burden substantially. As a result of this reluctance to become involved in Wellesley politics, they rely heavily on people like Mr. Juliani to represent them in town government. As the table on page xvi indicates, there are some Italians on the various town committees but Wellesley remains essentially a Yankee town with a Yankee power base. The Italians in Wellesley prefer not to lead the parade and, for the most part, maintain their culture within their own secure neighborhoods by working for the wealthier (and in some cases, less wealthy) members of the community. At a time when the majority of the residents of a town such as Wellesley are furiously scrambling to "make it," it is comforting to observe these unpretentious people, content and happy with their lot in life, enjoying the pleasures of their homes, families, and community. This has become an increasingly rare phenomena in such suburban towns, with exceptions like Beacon Hill, the North End, and "Southie" in Boston, and it is a credit to the Italian people of Wellesley.

Interview: with GEORGE STAFFIERI, President ITALO-AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL CLUB, INC., 80 Oak Street (Precinct B), March 25, 1975; March 26, 1976

(Photo of Italo-American Educational Club, Inc.)

The first night I spoke with Mr. Staffieri, The Wellesley Hockey Association was holding its annual banquet at the Club. Mr. Staffieri graciously excused himself and led me downstairs into the recreation room where we could talk. He briefly went over the history of the Club, reiterating the 1966 Townsman article (see item **(D)**), but seemed more interested in talking about the social functions the Club takes part in. among these are various activities for the elderly, the High School, the Boy Scouts. He then turned to the one requirement for membership in the Club. This "Rule", which is another one of those traditions handed down over the years and resistant to change, is that only those men who carry paternal Italian names can become Regular members. If a woman is of Italian descent but marries a non-Italian, she and her husband may join but are referred to as Associate members. Although not meant in any way to be discriminatory, there is a distinction between "Regular" and "Associate" member. With no disrespect intended, the same familiar smile accompanies both "Associate Member" and "outsider." While speaking with Mr. Staffieri, he let the word "outsider" slip into his remarks and quickly became embarrassed until I knowingly returned a smile and assured him that I understood what he meant. The reason for his embarrassment was that he was speaking to one. Being married to an Italian is close enough, but it is still not the real thing. I will always be an "Associate". Although this is essentially a man's club, a place where the boys can get away from the girls, there exists within it a very active Women's Auxiliary (see Townsman article for details). The reason behind this "paternal name" only" regulation is to keep the core of the Club unequivocally Italian. In the earlier days of the Club's existence this rule was not questioned but within the past few years it has occasionally been challenged...unsuccessfully.

At the time of this interview I was not aware of the comprehensive history referred to at the beginning of the November 10 Townsmen article. I asked Mr. Staffieri if he could give me any historical data concerning the Club and he said no. Whether or not this study was ever completed, I do not know. There are between 350-400 members, including Regular and Associates, who belong to the Italo-American Educational Club, Inc. Mr. Staffieri has been the President of the Club for the past two years and lives, strangely enough, in Natick. His mother emigrated from Avellino and his father from Naples. He was born in East Boston, one of several children, and he moved to his present home in Natick so that his children could “have more room to breathe and get a better education.” The remainder of our interview consisted of personal observations made by Mr. Staffieri. When asked why the Italian people chose Wellesley over places to live, he pointed out that “If you were uprooted from your homeland and sent to another country you would look for a place that reminded you of home.” Evidently, Wellesley reminded a good many Italian people of home. Once a few families came and settled here, friends and relatives followed and the Italian population naturally increased.

The next topic of conversation concerned family discipline. According to Mr. Staffieri, “We weren’t afraid to hit our kids. We brought them up to respect us.” This parental discipline and respect is probably one of the reasons that the Italian families remain so close and that the Italian neighborhoods in Wellesley are safe just as Boston’s North End is reputed to be. Mr. Staffieri said that when he wants to eat good Italian food, he goes to Marconi’s in Ashland. This brought up another subject. Why, I asked, are there no Italian restaurants in Wellesley when there is such a large Italian population living here? His answer was that very few Italian people go into the restaurant business and if they do, they especially avoid Italian restaurants. To anyone other than an Italian, pasta made well is a treat. To an Italian it is an everyday occurrence. He pointed out that most pizza businesses are run by nationalities other than Italians.

Mr. Staffieri did not have much more to say, nor I to ask, and he recommended that I return the following night to talk with Peter Amalfi, the first President of the Club.

I returned the following night after my interview with Mr. Juliani. The men were playing cards in one room behind closed doors and Bocce in their special indoor Bocce alley (see photos). My presence there did not go unnoticed, since I was the only female on the premises. However, Mr. Staffieri did not show up until later that evening and I was informed that Mr. Amalfi had not come to the Club as usual that evening. Instead, I talked with the janitor. He told me that he had come from the region of Italy where Parmesan cheese is made, Parma. He said that he never went past the first grade and was one of the immigrants who was taught English by the leaders of the Club when it was originally developed for that purpose. He mentioned in passing that he had moved to New York City and lived there for several years but did not like the city and moved back to Wellesley.

While speaking with him, another man approached me and was upset that I had not asked to speak to him and was, instead, talking (quite innocently on my part) with the janitor (who, of course, knew nothing!) This second gentleman was the Vice President of the Club, Benny Ralli. Mr. Ralli had in previous years served several terms as President of the club and was in alternate years a Vice President. Evidently, this happened to be the year of one of his Vice Presidential resigns. Mr. Ralli was born on Salem Street in the North End of Boston. When I asked what brought him to Wellesley he smiled and said, “The Bocce alleys.” I believe he was telling the truth. In the earlier days of the Italian settlement in Precinct B, Bocce alleys were prevalent in many of the backyards. Bocce, I should explain, is the Italians’ answer to bowling. It is played with medium size balls which are rolled on the ground, or in an alley. There are no pins involved, as there are in bowling, but the motions are the same even though the rules are not. Benny said that when he first came to live on Oak Street there were “lots of pigs and chickens...even if you could believe it you wouldn’t believe it.” He also said that Pleasant Street, which used to be Pleasant

Circle, was once a stone quarry. Benny is retired now but he used to be a stone mason. At one time, he did do some work for Diehl's. He also helped build the overhead bridges crossing Rt. 128 and "the Harvard Gas Station in Boston" is to his credit as well. More than what he built, however, he remembers how he built. Before machines were used, Benny carried stones, in some cases boulders, one by one up ladders on his shoulders. Benny worked. While he was reminiscing about his career as a stone mason, I asked him if I could take a picture of the men playing Bocce. He smiled from ear to ear and said, "of course." With his arm draped around me, protectively, he led me into the indoor Bocce alley which is the pride and joy of the Club and told me to be careful of a young Italian man at the end of the alley who was a "wolf." After taking some pictures, which came out gray since the room is made out of what appears to be cement and was filled with cigarette smoke, I prepared to leave. I was told, however, that I could not leave without first talking with Larry Corda. Mr. Corda, owner of Larry's Barber shop on Linden Street (see photos), where some of the original meetings of the Club were held, had been President of the Club for a total of four years. Benny brought him in to talk with me, but he was in the midst of a good card game and only stayed long enough to tell me that it is a great club, that the members have respect for each other, and that he has not noticed any change in the closeness of the Italian community over the years. Then back to the game. Benny was still talking, but I was losing energy and politely bid him goodnight. He kissed me on the cheek as I left. Come to think of it, I never did get to see Peter Amalfi, the first President of the Club!

Interview: with STANLEY FABBRI, President THE RELIANCE CLUB, 33 Clifford Street (Precinct F), April 9, 1976

(Photo of The Reliance Club)

The original meeting place of The Reliance Club was a garage on Seaver Street. The above Club was built in 1923. At that time, the members dug the cellar themselves in order to save money. According to Mr. Fabbri, The Reliance Club has the same hours, rules and regulations of the Italo-American Educational Club, Inc. They also have Regular and Associate members, dictated by paternal name. Their membership and building, however, are smaller. There are only 80 members in The Reliance Club.

Mr. Fabbri confirms Mr. Juliani's statement that the reason for the existence of the two separate clubs is essentially due to a difference in dialect and originating region in Italy. The members of this Club are from the northern part of Italy, specifically Bologna, while members of the Italo-American Education club, Inc. are from the southern part of Italy. Mr. Fabbri said that there used to be a certain amount of friction between the two clubs but that, although they remain separate and do not do much together, the friction has subsided. He did point out, however, that the Reliance Club holds the championship in Bocce this year in spite of the fact that they have no indoor alley.

According to Mr. Fabbri, who lives in Weston, 80 percent of the Club's membership lives within the immediate neighborhood of the Club. Most of the members are old, in their eighties. The younger generation, the sons of theme immigrants, do not join the Club or stay in Wellesley, according to Mr. Fabbri. He attributes this to a change in the standard of living among the Italians. The young people seem to be more independent and more adjusted to the "American" way of life. There is a possibility that The Reliance Club will cease to exist as its older members vanish. Mr. Fabbri does not fee that the Associate Members will continue the Club. The remaining 20 percent of the Club's membership come from such neighboring towns as Natick, Framingham, Weston, Newton, and even Brockton. These are people who, either use to live in Wellesley and are familiar with the Club, or people who have friends or relatives here and have no club of their own.

Mr. Fabbri reiterated the fact that the majority of the immigrants worked as laborers when they first came to Wellesley for the simple reason that they did not know how to read or write English. He also confirmed Mr. Juliani's statement that, generally speaking, the Italian people are not interested in politics.

I questioned Mr. Fabbri about religious practices and he said that in Europe he observed that the men usually stay home while the women go to church but that over here the ratio is half and half. The church belonging to Precinct F. is St. Paul's on Washington Street.

These two clubs are essentially alike. The difference seems to lie in size and age of members. The Reliance Club is smaller, less active, and older. Whether or not it will survive is questionable. The Italo-American Educational Club, Inc., on the other hand, is larger in size and membership, includes both young and old, and is considerably more active within the community. At this time there seems to be no question at all but that it will survive.

Italian Population Study - Background and conclusions of Statistical Data

Background Information:

I was informed by Mr. Juliani, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, that the two Italian precincts in Wellesley are Precinct B (the original settlement) and Precinct F. Using the 1975 List of Residents at the Wellesley Library, I went over every street in each district and took down the number of Italian families living on each. From this data, I concluded that there are four streets in each district which have heavier concentration of Italian families living on them than do the rest. This proved to be convenient for my purposes and, as such, I used these eight streets upon which to base my List of Residents study. In the 1887-88 List of Residents, the oldest I could find, there were many Hunnewells, Fiskes, Fullers, Clapps, and so forth but not one Italian name was recorded. There were thirty-three Italian families listed in the entire List of Residents for the year 1911. As my charts show, I started with the year 1925 and did a study every ten years, ending with 1975.

Conclusions

Precinct B

In 1925, the majority of Italian families within Precinct B lived on Oak Street. At that time, there were 27 Italian families living on Oak Street. 2 on Pleasant Street, none on Pine Tree Road and Simpson Road did not exist. In 1935, Oak Street remained the most popular street in the precinct with 95 per cent of the families living there. Pine Tree Road follows with 68 percent and last but not least Pleasant Street with 46 percent. By 1945, however, Oak Street was evidently sharing its popularity with Pine Tree Road, each maintaining 85 percent while Pleasant Street again is last with 47 percent. In 1955 and 1965 Oak Street still holds the top rank with 75 percent and 77 percent respectively. Pine Tree Road is again second, with 58 percent and 64 percent respectively. Pleasant Street again is last for both years, trailing after the newly accepted Simpson Road. By 1975, Pine Tree Road pulled ahead of Oak Street with 70 percent. Simpson Road follows with 60 percent. Pleasant Street is third with 54 percent and Oak Street, surprisingly, is last with 51 percent.

It seems that until last year, 1975, Oak Street had the most Italian families living on it. The Italo-American Educational Club is on 80 Oak Street. As of 1975, however, the Italian population seems to have moved to Pine Tree Road and Simpson Road and the Italian population on Pleasant Street is at its highest. It looks as though the acceptance by the Town of Simpson Road in 1949 may have attracted some families away from Oak Street. Excluding the year 1925, the only street having less than 50 percent Italian families living on it is Pleasant Street. Relative to the other streets within this precinct, it is safe to

say from these results that these three or four streets were in 1925, and still remain, the core of the Italian neighborhood in Precinct B.

Precinct F

In 1925, the majority of Italian families were living on Paine Street while Rice, Smith and Twitchell Streets shared an equal percentage of the remaining families. In 1935, the population shifted over to Smith and Twitchell Streets with Paine Street following second and Rice Street third. Again in 1945 the two most popular streets were Smith and Twitchell, with Smith first, then Twitchell, then Rice, and a very small percentage living on Paine Street. Ten years later, in 1955, Twitchell became the most popular, with Smith Street second, Paine Street third and Rice Street fourth. In 1965, however, Smith Street was again the most popular street with Paine Street following second, Twitchell third and Rice last. As of 1975, the popular street was once again Smith Street, then Paine Street, Twitchell, and Rice Streets. Excluding the year 1925, there are two streets which at one time had less than 50 percent Italian families on them; Rice Street twice, in 1935 and 1945, and Paine Street in 1945.

General Conclusions

Precinct B seems to have the more predictable and stable population pattern. Oak Street began as the most heavily populated by Italian families in 1925 and for the most part (except for 1975), remained so throughout the years. In Precinct F, however, Paine Street began as the most heavily populated street in 1925 but lost that position to Smith and Twitchell Streets in the following years. It is interesting to note that while Oak Street maintained its popularity until 1975, Paine Street had its highest percentage in that year. The percent of Italian families living in Precinct F. seems to fluctuate from street to street over the years more than do those of Precinct B. That seems to be an indication that there was more movement within Precinct F than Precinct B during these years.

In Precinct B there was only one street, Pleasant Street, which frequently had less than 50 percent Italian families living on it. In Precinct F there were two streets, Rice and Paine, which shared this distinction but less frequently. Generally speaking, the studies from Precinct B seem to be more consistent than those from Precinct F. The movement within Precinct F, along with the smaller, less active club, seem to indicate a restlessness which is not found so much in Precinct B. The fact that the younger generation of Italian people in Precinct F are moving away from Wellesley will much affect the future nature of that Precinct which already exhibits signs of instability.

Map of Precinct B - (1. Oak Street; 2. Pleasant Street; 3. Pine Tree Road; 4. Simpson Road)

Spreadsheet showing the above streets by "Italian Families"; "Total Families", and "percent" in 1925, 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965 & 1975.

Map of Precinct F – (1. Paine Street; 2. Rice Street; 3. Smith Street; 4. Twitchell Street)

Spreadsheet showing the above streets by "Italian Families"; "Total Families", and "percent" in 1925, 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965 & 1975.

Occupational Study from the Lists of Residents (male & female) for 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965 & 1975.

Ads from the Wellesley Townsman, April 8, 1976 (page 25):

James Gallerani, Landscaping; Nino Guarino, Mason; Leo Villa, Contractor; Joe Indresano, Landscaping; Gino Perdoni, Landscaping; Ovidio Verdelli, Landscaping, Labadini Tree & Landscape Co.; Al Indresano, Paving; F. Diehl & Son on Linden Street.

Occupation Study

Conclusions

The years 1935, 1945, and 1955 show Labor heading the list of occupations among the Italian people while Gardening is in second place. In 1965, Labor and Gardening slip down into third place. In 1975 Gardening remains in third place but Labor slips down another notch to fourth. Also, in 1935 there were no Town Employees listed but in 1965 and 1975 Town Employee ranks second on the list. This shows an increasing interest in public affairs, and more active participation in the community.

The further back you go, the more you find that occupations tend to be lumped into categories such as Labor, while in more recent years the occupations seem to take on more individual titles. A sense of identity and social consciousness becomes more visible. For example, the title Gardner becomes Landscaper (though I have grouped them all into the same category); Janitors become Custodians; Laborers become Hoist Operators and Crane Operators and Chopper Operators. It seems that as the Italian people became more settled and more educated, they developed more of a pride in their work and made a distinction between being a Laborer or a Cement Finisher, Metal Sheet Burner, Toolmaker, etc. I'm sure that being a Laborer has a different connotation than that of being a Hoist Operator.

The year 1975 is the first year that there is a noticeable difference in professional occupations. For the first time you see such titles as Executive, Director, President. Many of these titles are probably tied in with the many construction firms that are now owned and operated by Italian families. However, the younger generation of Italian people seem to be going more into the professions while the older generation are staying with the trades they brought over from Italy. This is one of the sad things about becoming "Americanized." Many of the trades that the older Italian people make a living at are slowly disappearing and no one is taking their place. Cabinet makers, shoemakers, toolmakers, tailors and the like are becoming an endangered species.

As you will see from the Advertisements I cut out from last week's Townsmen, landscaping, contracting and masonry are still going strong in Wellesley. As long as there are places like the Cliff Estates in Wellesley, there will be landscapers and as long as there is Diehl's and construction, there will be masonry and contracting. These occupations are not in any danger because there is still a large demand for them and there is money to be made in them. Tailoring, on the other hand, is a unique skill which takes years of learning and practice but which brings in very little money because of economic factors such as the high cost of material. There are very few people who have the time and/or money to treat themselves to tailor-made clothes anymore. We seem to be in an era of casual clothing and increased leisure time, which go hand in hand.

For the most part, the female segment of the Italian population have remained housewives over the years. The fact that Italians have a very tight-knit family structure probably has everything to do with this. Italian men, generally speaking, feel strongly that the place of the woman is in the home. Of course, men in general have always felt this way up until the last several years. In spite of this, there are a few indications that things are changing. In 1955 Typist and Fashion Artist are among those occupations listed: in 1975 Secretary and Teacher are listed. Relative to the changes taking place among the male occupations this may seem very slight. It is, however, significant. Those women who do choose to work outside of the home now have the opportunity to become something more than Laundresses or Maids or Seamstresses and it seems likely that they will take advantage of these opportunities.

As a culture, the Italian people are definitely being affected by the American way of life. They came over because of the opportunities here and they are taking advantage of them. Many of them have become

prosperous. The problem is that in the process, they risk losing some of the charm of their culture. Even now, as you talk with the older Italian men, you can feel it slipping through their fingers. It won't be too long before the younger generation becomes the older generation and the traces of their culture which are still visible today will have vanished. That is why it is not insignificant or unimportant that those members of the Italian community who could well afford to change their way of life and move to Cliff Estates choose instead to remain where they are and hang on to what they have. They recognize it as the rare and valuable commodity which it is. While these people remain, there is still hope for the continued life and culture of the Italian communities in Wellesley.

Taken from Wellesley Annual Town Report

1975

(Note: The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of Italian members out of total members for each specific Committee, for purposes of comparison)

Elected Town Officers

Town Meeting Members (by Precinct)

Appointed Town Officers

Appointed Standing Committees

Various photos: **Precinct B:** Gubellini's Grocery Store on Oak Street; Looking down Oak Street; Looking down Pleasant Street; Stone houses and Grape Arbors on Oak, Pleasant, Westerly Streets; Home of Mr. Grignaffini (Pleasant Street); Italian and American flags flying together on Westerly Avenue; Larry's Barber Shop'; "Larry" Relaxing in his Barber Shop"; Diehl's – employer of many Italians; 148 Linden St., Built by Grignaffini Construction; "The Boy's" Playing Bocce at The Italo-American Educational Club, Inc.;

Precinct F: In keeping with the Italian tradition of remaining quietly in the background, this simple, hand printed sign, the only ornament adorning the plain black door of this unassuming gray building is the only indication that you are now standing before the front entrance of THE RELIANCE CLUB of Wellesley; Twitchell Street; Paine Street; Looking up Rice Street; Another Grape Arbor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special thanks and appreciation go to Mr. Felix Juliani who gave me much of the information in this study. He is also responsible for the Townsman articles which he had in his personal files and let me Xerox. Without the time and help he gave me I would not have known where to begin.

I also extend my thanks to: Mr. George Staffieri, Mr. Stanley Fabbri, and to Mr. Richard H. Brown, Planning Director, for letting me use the offices and Lists of Residents of the Planning Board for my studies.

The Map of Wellesley (1976) was purchased from the Town Clerk."

H) "Our Italian Communities", Jane Pirozzolo, *Townsmen*; February 3, 1977, Page 28

"The Wellesley Historical Society will meet Sunday, February 6, 3p.m. at the Italo-American Club, 80 Oak Street, to hear guest speaker Jane Pirozzolo discuss "Wellesley's Italian communities". In her talk, Mrs. Pirozzolo will analyze the motivation and patterns seen in Italian immigration to the Boston area. Using information from personal interviews with Wellesley residents as well as traditional historical sources, she will then focus on the immigrants' choice of Wellesley as a home, the two distinct groups of Italo-Americans which evolved in Wellesley, and their subsequent involvement in the business, social, and political life of the town.

Jane Pirozzolo will receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in English this June from Boston University. She researched Italians in Wellesley for a course entitled, "Geography of the Boston Region", taught by Boston University Professor George K. Lewis. Mrs. Pirozzolo and her husband Richard moved to Wellesley three years ago from Suffield, Connecticut. Mr. Pirozzolo, originally from New Haven, is in the Public Relations Department of Boston University.

Salvatore DeFazio III, a Director of the Society, will introduce Mrs. Pirozzolo.

President Charles Thomas plans to call the meeting to order with a ceremonial gavel recently presented to the Society by Helen Sherman of Wellesley, whose father, Roger I. Sherman made and presented identical gavels to President Herbert Hoover and members of Congress on April 19, 1931. A brass plaque attests that the wood for the gavels came from an ancient elm tree which stood near the Lexington Battle Green during the Battle of Lexington on April 19, 1775.

All members and friends of the Historical Society and the Italo-American Club are cordially invited to meet together at the Club (Pleasant Street entrance) to share in this program. The afternoon will conclude with refreshments."

I) "Italians Have a Long Rich History in Town", Jackie Green. *Townsmen*; April 13, 1978, Pages 1 & 14

"When the 19th Century melted into the 20th, it brought with it the beginning of a new life for many Italian immigrants who built homes and jobs for themselves in the small town of Wellesley, and began to contribute their skills and civic pride to the growing community.

Many of the men came from mountainous regions in Italy where rocks and stones dominated the landscape. They were men who had learned the art of separating the stone from the land and setting it slowly and meticulously to form the homes in which they lived.

The Italian villages from which the immigrants came were rural and isolated from the city. Out of necessity, the children were taught to use their hands until the skills necessary for daily living became second nature. Stone cutting, masonry, farming, gardening and woodworking were practiced to perfection.

Joseph Grignaffini, a second generation Italian-American who works with his father in their Wellesley construction company, relates his understanding of the young Italian's upbringing. "They were self-educated and self-sufficient, learning trades for their livelihood," he says. "They had to go out and work,

and that was their life. It's amazing what they did; to come to a strange country not even knowing the language."

But come they did, to the eastern coast, to the cities of New York and Boston, ready to offer their skills. It was the quiet country atmosphere that attracted the early immigrants to Wellesley. It was closer to the land, to what they had known, and it offered the materials with which to ply their trades.

Augustus Bergonzoni was one of the first Italians to settle in Wellesley. A skilled building contractor, he set up his family homestead on Wellesley Ave. with a small horse and carriage rental business thrown in for good measure. His daughter, Mary, was the first Italian-American girl born in Wellesley. Now 89 years of age, Mary settled on Oak Street after her marriage to Albert Malaguti where she still resides with her daughter, Louse Slamin.

The Oak Street area, commonly referred to as the "Back Bay." Became the focal point for much of the Italian community.

Victor Maccini, another second generation Italian-American, vividly remembers the settlement process in which his father and mother, Luigi and Celesta, were instrumental.

Luigi Maccini was one of the first Italians to settle in the area, coming to South Natick in 1905 and gaining employment with William Diehl as a master stone mason. Simultaneously, he began buying lots from Diehl at what was then called the "old sand pit" on Oak Street and sending for relatives to immigrate to Wellesley to fill Diehl's need for skilled workers.

"The Italians had the knowhow to build a stone cellar," Victor Maccini says. "My father knew how to excavate and cut the stones. He built about six houses on land he bought from Diehl, working at night in his spare time. The land was wild. It was a slow process."

The Maccinis moved from South Natick into Wellesley, settling at 175 Linden Street, and Luigi worked for Diehl's, which was the biggest business in town, all his life. He sent for his relatives, and the men came, established their jobs and homes; then sent for their families. Many were bachelors, and as they settled into the community, they married the sisters, daughters or cousins of their co-workers.

"My mother, Celesta, ran a boarding house for those who came over, until they got settled. There were always new ones staying with us," recalls Victor.

He adds that nearly all the men eventually settled in the "Back Bay" and worked for William Diehl. "There has to be a starter," he says of the businessman, "and he was good to the men."

Victor also has fond childhood memories of working for Diehl to cut and store ice from a pond on Linden Street for use in the local families' ice boxes.

"He'd give us kids a job harvesting the ice," he says of Diehl. "We'd pull floats (huge chunks of ice) and pack them in the ice houses, and it was quite a process. It served the community with ice for the whole summer.

The "Back Bay community was a close and friendly one, and families were more self sufficient than in our won fast-paced time. Everybody had a garden and chickens or hens," says Victor Maccini. Larger animals, such as pigs, also were raised and were "harvested" at Thanksgiving time.

Louise Binovi also remembers the quieter times, having been born just across the street from her present Oak Street home. "I've seen this town grow," she says nostalgically. "I went to Sprague School, and now it's closed."

"I wish those days were back again. No one had cars; we all walked everywhere, and there sure wasn't as much illness."

Diehl's Pond, where Victor Maccini helped cut ice, is now the Linden Square apartments but Mrs. Binovi remembers the ice house and also swimming in the pond on hot summer days.

Her father, John Campana, came to Wellesley from Northern Italy with her grandfather, and they were just two of the immigrants who stayed at the Maccini home and then began working for Diehl.

Mrs. Binovi relates how her father, once established, returned to Italy to marry her mother, and then came home to Wellesley in 1908, and bought a house on Oak Street.

"We were all happy," she says, "we got along well with our neighbors," and adds that "there is still a strong sense of community on the street."

As the town grew and flourished, new immigrants arriving from Italy would come to the Boston area, look up families who had settled here from the same town in Italy, and be welcomed into the community. Among these later settlers was Louis Grignaffini, a stone mason from the Parma district in Italy, who arrived in Everett in 1932 looking for work.

While still in Italy, Louis had courted Margaret Pini, one of 10 children of an Everett, Mass., family, who was in Italy visiting relatives. After she returned to Everett, the pair corresponded and it was Margaret's family that referred Louis to their cousins on Oak Street in Wellesley, and who ultimately helped him settle in the town.

Soon after, Louis and Margaret were married, and they settled in Wellesley, where Louis had built a house at 60 Pleasant Street, blasting and cutting into the ledge, and working in his spare time.

By 1945 Louis Grignaffini had opened his own masonry business, and after 1949, his construction company became one of the principal employers of the new Italian immigrants.

Carrying on the business with his father, Joe Grignaffini explains the change in work opportunities today. "We hired more men when we did masonry and plastering," he says, "but now we mostly find them jobs with subcontractors and more and more men are working for the Town because it provides job security. I know skilled cabinetry makers who have gone to work for the town just because of job security."

Joe Grignaffini knows many stories of how the lives of the Italians in the homeland and those of the Italian Americans in Wellesley, have intertwined. He relates how his father arranged for Louise Grignaffini (Louis' sister) to live with his family in Wellesley just before World War II. Louise was just 15 years old at the time, and her parents had died unexpectedly.

"They raised her," Joe says of his father and mother, and adds that Louise is today married to John Maccini, superintendent of grounds at the Junior High.

Joe also likes to tell the story of Leo Villa, once a chicken farmer in Connecticut, who contacted his namesake cousins on Oak Street for help in finding a job in the building industry. He soon obtained work with the Grignaffinis, but not long after was inducted into the Army.

As luck would have it, he was stationed in Italy, where he met Louis Grignaffini's niece. The rest is romantic history, and the couple settled at 10 Oak Street.

Perhaps one of the most striking symbols of the Italian-American community in Wellesley is the Italo-American Educational Club, constructed in 1936 at 80 Oak Street, on property made available by Antonio Juliani.

The club had both social and educational purposes, providing a place to play cards, join a game of bocce, or take advantage of training courses specifically designed to assist Italian immigrants in becoming American citizens.

It began with 200 men enrolled as charter members, and its ranks swelled quickly. Before long, an active Women's Auxiliary was formed, and the Club became extremely active in community service projects.

The group's first president was Peter Amalfi, who still resides on Hilltop Road. When the club marked its 30th anniversary in 1966, his son Amos was president, and was quoted to saying, "The success of the Italo-American Club is due chiefly to a team effort - - it would be an impossibility for one individual to accomplish the amount of work required for this organization."

Almost any day of the week, the Club is a center of activity. As the second and third generations of the original immigrants have grown and married, the club has become a true melting pot. As one member commented, "It really is like the League of Nations."

Still, past traditions run strong, and continue to rejuvenate the spirit of the community.

In 1976, Louise Binovi's daughter, Paula, became the most recent case in point. Paula took a two-week vacation from her job at Diehl's, and traveled with her cousin to the Northern Italian town of Bore, located in the Parma district.

Due to problems of flight scheduling, she arrived two days before her relatives expected her. She entered her cousin's restaurant, right in the center of town, and immediately became the focal point of the excitement and commotion her arrival caused.

She hardly had a chance to notice Mario Coduri, her cousin's brother-in-law, until things quieted down. But before long, they struck up a game of cards call "briscola," and everyone spoke in the old dialect which Paula had grown up hearing.

By the end of her visit, Paula and Mario had become more than friends. "We were never formally introduced," says Paula, "there was just some magic that happened between us."

For the next few months they corresponded regularly, and the following October, Paula's parents went to Italy to have a look at their daughter's suitor. And they approved. At Christmas, Mario came to Wellesley spending a month surveying the job market for stone masons, and finally asking Mr. Binovi for his daughter's hand in marriage. The rest of the plans were made by transatlantic telephone but on November 13, 1977, Paula Binovi became the bride of Mario Coduri and as the announcement says, a reception followed at the Italo American Club. Now the couple lives on Oak Street. Mario is employed by the Wellesley Park and Tree Division, where he does "a little of everything," from building stone walls to landscaping. He feels at home in the community, playing cards at the Italo-American Club, or picking up a game of bocce, and soon they will be raising their own family.

Joe Grignaffini says that plans have often been bandied about for setting down the full history of the Italian community, but they have never been implemented. It is a full story, rich with personal history, and it would be an important record of the development of Wellesley.”

Photo Captions (See original for images)

Photo #1: “SUNDAY AFTERNOON just wouldn’t be the same without a friendly gave of cards among old friends at the Italo-American Club on Oak Street, Keeping up with their weekly habit are, from left, Charles Niccoli, Benni Ralli, Peter Amalfi, Bruno Mortarelli and Lou Palladini.”

Photo #2: “SOLID AS A ROCK is this house built from the stones which Louis Grignaffini excavated from land at 60 Pleasant Street. A skilled stone mason, Mr. Grignaffini built this house for his family by working at the project nights and weekends, when he had time off from his regular job.”

- J) “Building a Tradition the Family Way: DeFazio’s Celebrate Two Anniversaries”, George Young, *Townsmen*; February 22, 1979, Page 9

“Near the corner of Washington Street and Abbott Road in Wellesley Hills stands one of the oldest “Ma and Pa” stores in town. It’s the DeFazio Market, owned by the DeFazio family, who also owns The Windsor Press.

These businesses are located in the building which bears the family name, the DeFazio Building. This year marks 75 years since the market first occupied this structure and the 50th anniversary of the founding of The Windsor Press.

The origins of both date back to 1898 when Salvatore DeFazio, Sr., came to America from the Italian town of Gaeta, where he was born 25 years before. He stayed with his older brother, owner of a grocery store in Needham, and it was here that Salvatore learned the grocery trade.

Four years later, he came to Wellesley Hills Square and occupied a building located where the parking lot of Peter’s Market is today. Roger W. Babson first opened his statistical business here, sharing the building with DeFazio (Babson was on the second floor while the latter was on the first).

In 1902, Salvatore sailed to Italy, married Marietta Trani, and returned to Wellesley, where he occupied a store in the building across the street from the Wellesley Hills railroad station, known as the Post Office building.

This structure is rich in local history. In 1893, on the second floor, was the first telephone exchange in Wellesley. To celebrate its opening, a group of townspeople gathered at the home of Gamaliel Bradford (near the present Bradford Road) and another group gathered at the Cliff Road home of Albion Clapp in order to talk to each other via the telephone. Built as a post office for the Wellesley Hills area, this office occupied the building until the present post office was built in 1952.

Fifty years earlier, the post office occupied the west end of the building while the DeFazio Market was in the center. The telephone company moved out in 1907.

A meeting place

The store soon became a meeting place for the locals. Since the trolley cars stopped in front of DeFazio's, it served as a waiting room. As time went on the DeFazios became very popular and very well liked. Mrs. DeFazio greeted all with a warm smile.

As part of his business, Salvatore went to market on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to purchase supplied from wholesalers. Eventually, his children (three boys and three girls) would each take a trip with their father into Boston. Awakened at 2 a.m. the child was placed on blankets in back of the wagon, where he or she continued to sleep until reaching the market place. By horse, via Beacon Street and Tremont Street to Fanueil Hall and the Quincy Market, the trip took four hours.

Every morning, descending the hill by Boston College, when the sun came up over the horizon, Salvatore would greet the sunrise with "Buon Giorno, Santo Solo," meaning "Good Morning, Holy Sun." Outbound, a daily ritual would be to stop in the North End for Italian pastries. Returning to Wellesley Hills by 2 p.m. they unloaded the groceries from the wagon.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, both father and children went from house to house, taking orders for groceries (the mother stayed home to mind the store). These rounds were made in what is now the Country Club and Cliff Estate areas. In taking orders they either good groceries from the wagon or they would deliver the next time around.

Family tradition

The elder DeFazio went into the house while the children remained by the wagon. From the house he used hand signals for his children to bring a particular item. For example, for a peck of potatoes, he gave a vertical signal, for half a peck, a horizontal hand signal. On weekends, there were deliveries by the children via bicycles each fitted with a wire basket. While the children attended grammar school and high school, they were required to come home and make deliveries.

After many years of hard work and long hours, Salvatore Sr., was able to have a house built in 1914 at 416 Washington street for his family. Six years later, he bought the Post Office building and renamed it the DeFazio Building.

In 1926, Mr. and Mrs. DeFazio donated a 3000-pound bell to St. Paul's Church. Mrs. DeFazio visited her friends, asking them to donate gold so it could be melted for the bell. Last year, in memory of his parents, Salvatore, Jr. donated an automatic toiler for the bell.

Three years later, in 1929 the Wellesley Trust Bank which occupied the east end of the DeFazio building for several years, moved to its newly built headquarters at the corner of Washington and Abbott. The market then moved to the room vacated by the bank, where it is today.

In order to modernize his business, Salvatore senior bought a Republic truck with solid rubber tires (later replaced by a Model T truck). During the 1930s other changes were made. The second son, Mario, (affectionately called Mike) continued on in the store after graduating from Bentley College.

The elder DeFazio continued to work until 1947 when illness forced him to retire. From then on, Mario ran the store. Salvatore Sr. died in 1951. His wife, Marietta, survived him by nine years.

From the time she was little, the eldest daughter, Mrs. Assunta Piazza has and continues to work in the store. Mario's wife Betty, is also in the store daily, even after Mario's death in 1973. Five years ago, his son, Donald, sold his constructions company and took over ownership of the store. He has since converted the market into a delicatessen.

Windsor Press is born

The oldest son, Salvatore, Jr. founded the Windsor Press in 1929. Since railroads always interested him, he worked at the Wellesley Hills railroad station after school, during his high school days. While a senior in high school he wrote a paper on advertising, explaining how this and printing go hand in glove, feeding the mainstream of industry. Thus, the junior Salvatore pursued his interest, namely printing.

In September of 1926, he attended Boston University. While there, he discussed plans with a professor. Salvatore told him that he was interested in starting his own printing press. The professor said the place to go was Wentworth Institute, where the printing trade was taught from the ground up. The following September, Salvatore Jr., enrolled in a two year course. Graduating in 1929, he was ready to open a business.

The shed in the rear of 416 Washington street gave birth to the Windsor Press. First things first, purchase a printing press and necessary supplies. These were provided by a retired printer from Westwood who sold his press for \$125.

Salvatore, Jr., his father and brothers loaded the press onto their truck and took it back to Wellesley, where along with some neighbors, they unloaded the press and placed it inside the shed (this press is currently on display at the entrance to the Windsor Press office). It remained behind the family home until 1932, when his printing business was moved to the lower level of the DeFazio Building.

During these first few years, Salvatore, Jr., did all the work, from setting the type to selling and advertising. He went to see Nona Dougherty, secretary to Roger Babson, with the possibility of assisting Babson's printing needs. Since Mr. "B", as everyone called him, had been a friend of the DeFazio Family for almost 30 years, both he and Miss Dougherty visited the print shop the very next day.

There was a meeting of the minds, and, as a result, the Windsor Press became a supplier of Babson's printing needs. Since Roger Babson had his own ideas about printing, he dropped in many times to the shop to supervise, looking over the shoulder of compositor Jim O'Brien, asking questions and giving suggestions.

Then as now, the Windsor Press was a small organization, more concerned with quality than with quantity. The business expanded with more sophisticated processes and equipment. In 1940, a room was added on the ground level for an office (before this time, office was on the lower level along with the presses).

Over the years, the Windsor Press has been staffed with loyal, dependable workers. From 30 years on down in served, Mae Greenwood, Jim O'Brien, Joe DelConte, Charlie Hoosian, Celia Keeman and many others have been a part of this organization.

As mentioned earlier, railroading has been one of Salvatore's lifelong interests. In fact, he enjoys riding the rails very much. Having travelled through 44 of the 48 continental states, plus several foreign countries. As Salvatore says, railroading is the safest and most comfortable mode of travel, and half the fun is getting there.

Being a printer by trade, who else but Benjamin Franklin would be advocated by Mr. De Fazio. At one time large signs with Franklin's sayings were placed on the office window facing Abbott Road. They bore such maxims as "little leaks sink great ships" and "great trees grow from little acorns."

One year that the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra held a costume ball, Mr. and Mrs. DeFazio dressed up as Ben Franklin and wife, and won first prize for best costume.

Carrying on in true family tradition, Salvatore III is skillfully piloting the printing business on to its 75th year with new equipment and innovations. With two successful businesses this family has proven what dedication and hard work can achieve.”

Photo Captions (see original for images):

Photo #1: “ONE OF THE OLDEST “Ma and Pa” stores in Wellesley is DeFazio’s Market, located at 348 Washington street. This photo of the founders, Mr. and Mrs. Salvatore DeFazio was taken in 1904. Since that time, the DeFazios have acquired the business block and are also well-established in the printing business, having founded the Windsor Press 50 years ago.”

Photo #2: “THE DEFAZIO BUILDING, as it appeared in 1910 (top) and as it looks today. In the early 1900’s, the market shared the block with the Post Office and a tailor.”

K) *Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds Corn*, Beth Hinchcliffe; 1981

From Index:

Italian Gardens (Hunnewell estate) p.28-29 “It took seven years before the work was completed, but by then he (Hunnewell) had brought the most beautiful and unusual elements of the Italian style of landscaping to America, in the first such garden seen here. More than that, he added his own experimentation. Since the trees grown in Italy would not grow here, he tried substituting evergreens. The result was an unusual terraced garden of sculpted trees which took advantage of the land but didn’t clutter the house’s magnificent view of the lake. Caption: Lake from top terrace of Italian Garden at “Wellesley”. Topiary trees on the terraces below were not yet tall enough to be seen. Stone steps led down to the balustrade walk by the lakeside and the boat landing.” **p.50** “As the visitor or resident rode up Washington Street from South Natick he was greeted by a most pleasant view. Wellesley was beautiful. On the right were miles of untouched woods, green and shady, and on the left were some of the most magnificent buildings in the state, if not the entire country: the elegant Hunnewell mansion, set back behind its English style landscaping, viewing the lake over its extraordinary Italian gardens; next the estate of Mrs. Durant, a gracious home on top of a rolling hill with a proud and beautiful vista of the college; and finally the grounds of Wellesley College itself. This was the image of the new town that its inhabitants were pleased to present and which was alluded to in an article written by Joseph Fiske in the 1884 history of Norfolk County.”

Italo-American Club p.74-75 “Another ice house was located behind Diehl’s. There was only a small pond there, but it was enough for Diehl’s needs. Eventually the area would be drained and filled in to make livable land for houses, and thus it was called Wellesley’s “Back Bay.” In this area developed Wellesley’s strongest ethnic community. William Diehl had employed Luigi Maccini, a master stone mason from Italy, who so prospered in his new job that he sent for relatives to fit the needs of his employer. Diehl, pleased with their industriousness, encouraged more of Maccini’s relatives and friends to come, starting an unusual and strong precedent of hiring from within, so that for almost a century Diehl’s has employed generation of the same tightly knit families. These Italian workers proudly built their own homes in the area behind Diehl’s buildings, marrying the sisters or daughters of co-workers becoming independent with their own gardens, hens, and pigs. Children played together and competed for the chance to pack ice after school. The heart of this area was the Gubellini Variety Store on Oak Street, which provided residents with the daily paper, penny candy, milk, sundries, and a porch for cool drinks,

talk, and an anchor for neighborhood traditions. Later, two very active clubs grew from this community – the Reliance Club and the Italo-American Club.”

- L) “It was the Happiest Place in the World: Back Bay Cling to Working-Class Roots”, Elaine Thompson, *Middlesex News*; September 19, 1988, Page 2A

“WELLESLEY- It’s the late 1800’s in this small community 15 miles west of Boston. Colleges are being constructed. New homes, schools and town buildings are going up and the Italian immigrants, known for their diligent work habits and stone masonry skills, are in great demand.

In 1876, a young Natick man of German descent named William Diehl opens a fuel business on Linden Street. Again, Italians, eager to make a good living in the land of opportunity, flock to the company to work the long hours, making ice and delivering it along with coal to local homes and businesses.

History has it that Diehl was so impressed with his Italian workers that he encouraged them to send for family members to come work for him. He rented homes, partitioned into several living quarters, behind his store to his Italian workers.

As more Italians crossed the Atlantic to work at his company, Diehl sold or gave land behind his company to his workers and helped them build their homes. The area including Oak, Pleasant, and Westerly streets, and Ivy, Pine Tree and Hill Top roads, soon became known as the Italian Neighborhood or Back Bay.

Descendants of the original Italian settlers, however, offer conflicting stories on how the area got the name it shares with the affluent neighborhood at the Charles River Basin in Boston.

Bruno Mortarelli, Jr., 53, a third generation employee at Diehl’s, said sometimes-rambunctious bocce players resulted in the area being nicknamed after Boston’s Back Bay neighborhood. Mortarelli’s uncle, John Maccini, thinks the neighborhood got its name because the homes were at the back of a pond at Diehl’s that was used to make ice.

Charles Gubellini, 75, a retired high school football coach, whose family operated Gubellini’s Market on Oak Street from 1922 until the early 80s, has another explanation.

“In the early 1920s, beyond my father’s store on Oak Street the land ended in a mound and formed a bay. Because of that the area was called Back Bay,” said Gubellini, whose father came to Wellesley in 1909. “And some people even called the store the Back Bay market, so we put a sign up saying that.”

In 1929, the mound was excavated, making Oak Street a throughway to the newly-constructed Sprague elementary School. The name, Back Bay, however, stuck, Gubellini said.

Proud of their heritage and new neighborhood, 25 Italians invested \$25 each to build the Italo-American Educational Club on Oak Street in 1938. The original purpose for the club was do away with the bigotry between the northern and southern Italians and help new immigrants get started in night school to learn English and become naturalized citizens.

Today, with several additions to the original building and 275 Italian members and 150 associate members of non-Italian descent, the club is a meeting place for several organizations with a large Italian membership, such as the police and fire department unions.

On weekends, and often during the week, families would gather with their home-made wine and listen to the accordion players, do the polka and play bocce and cards.

Two of the favorite gathering places were at the Zani home on Oak Street and underneath the grape vineyards at the Gubellini Market.

“At that time most of the Italians didn’t speak English so they would congregate at the store,” Gubellini recalled. “My father had built two bocce alleys behind the store. When everybody got through with their supper they’d gravitate to the store. They’d play bocce and the man next door would play the mandolin. It was the happiest place in the world.”

“We were a closely-knit, self-sufficient community and very proud. The neighborhood was like one large family,” recalled 53-year-old David Brossi, whose family has operated the Brossi Brothers Construction Company since the 1920s. “This atmosphere kept everyone on a straight and narrow road because everybody from the neighborhood has done well.”

As proud as the Italians were of their heritage and their new lives in America, their neighborhood was sometimes looked upon by outsiders as an undesirable part of town.

“The town put two dumps here and a stone crusher,” Brossi recalled. “And when I was a kid we walked two miles to the Hardy School because the Sprague School on Oak Street was closed because people from other parts of town didn’t want to send their kids to this part of town.” Brossi said. Today the school is used as a community recreation center.

At one time, more than 2,500 Italians lived in Wellesley. About 98 percent of them lived in the Back Bay area. Today the neighborhood is about 50 percent Italian, according to Brossi.

Today, Gubellini’s Market has been converted into an apartment complex. In place of Joe Diamond’s old junk yard are attractive and expensive condominiums, but the Italian pride and heritage still exists.

“It’s still a happy neighborhood, but it’s not a congregational place like it used to be.” Gubellini said. “Everybody speaks English now and people have cars now so they don’t depend on each other as much. Even though our Italian parents were very proud of their property and kept it up. Their descendants have completely improved the places. They’ve gone to college and become modernized Americans.”

Photo Caption – Bruno Mortarelli, left, Jeff Wight, center and John Glorioso play bocce at the Italian-American Club in Back Bay in Wellesley, a popular gathering spot.

M) *First Three Italian Families from Northern Italy in Wellesley*, Rosario Tosiello, Wellesley Historical Society; 1988

“FORWARD: The Wellesley Historical Society deeply appreciates the memory of Margaret Cremonini Brown who has made possible the publication of this essay on some of the first Italians to settle in the town of Wellesley. We are also grateful to Dr. Rosario J. Tosiello for making available his time and talents to see the project to fruition.

This essay is dedicated to the many Italian Americans in appreciation and recognition of their spirit and efforts in making the town of Wellesley what it is today. By reflecting on the contribution of the first three families it is hoped that others will continue to study and research the Italian American experience

in Wellesley. Hopefully, this modest effort is only a beginning. So much investigation and further information into the past “roots” is needed. How can this be done? Interest in uncovering family background, family trees, photos, newspaper articles, books and other family memorabilia all contribute to a better understanding of how, why and where our forefathers and mothers arrived and settled in “Wellesley the Beautiful”. These important resources from the past need to be developed and shared with future generations of Wellesley citizens.

Salvatore DeFazio III, President, Wellesley Historical Society, September 23, 1988

About the author: Rosario J. Tosiello is Professor of History at Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. He received his Ph.D. in 1971 from Boston University. For the last ten years he has intensively studied the Italian experience in America and has written and lectured on various aspects of it including the Sacco Vanzetti case, Italian American loyalty during World War II and Italian Americans and their religious experience in Boston. In addition he has taught courses on the Italian experience at Pine Manor College and Boston University. Dr. Tosiello is married to Kathleen Regal and is the father of Matthew, Andrew and Kassie Tosiello all of whom share an interest in things Italian. (*Ed. Note: Dr. Tosiello passed away in 2002.*)

PREFACE: The origins of this paper are to be found in the work of Mrs. Margaret (Cremonini) Brown who as a life-long resident of Wellesley and a member of the Wellesley Historical Society began to research the history of the first Italian families in the town of Wellesley. Her interest resulted from the belief that her own family, the Cremonini, were among the first three to settle there.

While she was one of five members of the Wellesley Historical Commission she proved a tireless worker in gathering details and establishing the fact that the Bergonzoni, Pezzetti and Cremonini were the town’s first three Italian families. Unfortunately, Mrs. Brown died before she could write her own paper, but even in her death her interest and support continued. She provided for the completion of her project by bequeathing a modest sum to the Historical Society for “the compilation, writing and publication of the account of the first three families (Bergonzoni, Pezzetti and Cremonini) from Northern Italy to settle in the town of Wellesley.” (1)

Accordingly, this paper has been written.

Despite high expectations that the findings of Mrs. Brown’s research would be found in her collected papers deposited at the Society, little has been recovered beyond her establishing who the first three families were and some sparse information about their early history. Apparently Mrs. Brown had not progressed beyond this stage, perhaps due to the insurmountable difficulties of uncovering more information.

These first families left little by way of a paper trail. Although they were an important part in the town’s development, their contributions were modest and as such did not produce great comment. Further, the exigencies of starting a new life in a foreign land left little time to develop the sense of history which would have led to the writing or preservation of necessary documents and materials.

With the passing of the second generation the residue of oral and artifactual materials has further winnowed away. Partial confirmation of these difficulties is found in the fact that there is no mention whatsoever of the earliest Wellesley Italians in the centennial history of the town Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds of Corn. Its brief discussion of the Italian presence in Wellesley commences with the twentieth century period.

Thus this project has been beset with more than the usual research problems. Nonetheless, thanks must be given to the descendants of those families who were willing to share whatever information they had: Mr. and Mrs. August Cremonini; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pezzetti; Mrs. Louise Slamin and Mrs. Lillian Cerramicole. Several members of the Society were also very helpful: President Salvatore DeFazio who on one of the coldest days of winter escorted this writer to meet the descendants, and who acquainted him with the various locations of the Italian community; and the Curator Barbara Gorely Teller who facilitated the use of the Society's materials. Finally, the author wishes to thank his wife Kathleen and children Matthew, Andrew and Kassie who supported and encouraged his efforts.

WELLESLEY'S FIRST ITALIANS – *Introduction*

The first Italian families to arrive in Wellesley during the last decade and a half of the nineteenth century did so at a time when the town had recently achieved independence from Needham. Previously it had been a town whose chief contact with things Italian came from its illustrious inhabitants' visits to that country and from their estates which recreated the formal gardens of Italy.

This rural community of 2500 was in the process of emerging into a self-conscious community under the auspices of wealthy patrons whose donations ranged from the town hall to the library and its first 5000 volumes. (2) Such was the concern and means of the leading citizens that when the town's only factory intruded on their quiet and sense of propriety, they purchased it, tore down most of "the offensive building" and donated the remainder to Wellesley College for dormitory space. Likewise, when a road was thought to be too close to a home, the road was moved! Activities such as these caused the town to be dubbed "the town that gets what it wants." (3)

Amidst the expanding public water system, the municipal street lighting system, and the architectural efforts of H.H. Richardson and Frederick Law Olmstead to create an idyllic society, reality intruded itself when some European workers held a contractor hostage for twelve hours for failure to pay them. He was rescued only after Boston's chief of police and twenty deputies arrived to end the situation. (4)

At the end of the first decade of independence a town historian could boast to neighboring Boston: "Here is your best bedroom, the chamber is well aired, the sheets are clean, the mattress comfortable, the screens are in, the quiet invites you to repose, and the singing of the birds will wake you in the morning. (5) Such was the town that Augusto Bergonzoni found when he arrived in Wellesley.

THE FIRST ITALIANS

The first Italian family to arrive in Wellesley was that of Augusto Bergonzoni. Augusto was born in Bologna in 1850 and migrated to the United States around 1885. (The record is not exact, but since his son Joseph was born in Bologna in 1882 and it is known that Augusto and his family left Boston for Wellesley in 1887, the date is probably correct.) Augusto left Bologna with his wife Luisa and his two sons Guyton and Joseph. It is not known why Augusto and his family left their native soil but it seems reasonable to assume that his family like thousands before and after was attracted by the lure of better prospects in America.

The Bergonzoni arrived first in Boston like many other immigrants probably because of its status as a transatlantic terminus. For nearly two years Augusto and his family struggled to establish their new life amidst the immigrants of that city. Then in 1887 the family migrated to Wellesley. Perhaps Augusto realized that the opportunities would be greater far from the crowd of competing immigrants. Whatever the reason, Augusto and his family moved to Wellesley, where it is recorded that Augusto Bergonzoni was assessed a poll tax in 1888 and 1889. (6)

Either Augusto had prospered in his short time in America, or he had come from Bologna with some resources, for in November, 1889, he purchased the land, house and buildings at 84 Wellesley Avenue from William and Margaret Buckley for \$900. (7)

August was first employed by Albion R. Clapp, one of the original committee of twenty-five for the independence of Wellesley, a water commissioner and real estate developer. (8) Bergonzoni worked as a landscape gardener and grader. It was while under Mr. Clapp, that Augusto and Luisa had a daughter, Mary, acknowledged as the first child of Italian descent to be born in Wellesley. Mary was born in one of the Clapp houses on Chestnut Street. (9)

At the rear of the Bergonzoni property on 84 Wellesley Avenue, there were two long, low houses which as early as 1897 were taxed by the town as “hotels,” known by the locals as “shanties,” but which were in fact quarters used to house single Italian men who worked as laborers. The existence of this structure and the 1896 listing of August Bergonzoni as “contractor and jobber” suggests that Augusto Bergonzoni acted in the capacity of a “padrone,” though that term never appears in any of the scanty records or in conversation with descendants. (10)

Padroni were individuals who were sufficiently familiar with the language and culture to be able to serve as intermediaries for fellow immigrants who were not. They have been viewed as either archetypical exploiters of their kinsmen or, more recently, as important agents in the capitalistic society who expedited the labor supply to where it was needed, and further, who helped in the process of immigrant assimilation. (11)

The men who were housed in these “hotels” were either unmarried or without their wives and families who remained in Italy until there were enough funds to send for them. These men were employed as gardeners or laborers by the Hunnewell family in their Italian gardens or by the town of Wellesley in digging the conduits for the gas, electricity and water supplies that were being installed in the modernization of the town.

These laborers were also used in road construction, road bed construction by the Boston and Albany Railroad, and by various contractors for the construction of cellars, stone walls etc. No doubt some of them were employed by Augusto Bergonzoni himself who became self-employed in the construction business.

Bergonzoni wasn't the only “hotel-keeper” in the town. There were several others run by men in the construction business. One such hotel was located along the Fuller Brook at the foot of Morton Street and owned by C. N. Taylor who was engaged in the installation of the town's water system. This modest dwelling was assessed for \$50.

These structures were long, low buildings with standing room in the center only. There were cooking facilities at one end, with bunk beds along the sides. Under the bunks were lockers which stored the workers' meager possessions – their clothing, cooking utensils, food etc. They drew their water from the pump at the family kitchen door. (The Bergonzoni had a pump for personal use inside the kitchen.) The workers washed themselves and their clothes in Fuller Brook when the weather permitted.

On the Bergonzoni property there was a huge barn, larger than the house itself, that housed the horses, wagons, farm implements, hay, grain and other supplies as well as toilet facilities for the immigrant laborers. Their toilet paper was either soft fruit wrappers or newspapers or Sears catalogue pages. (12)

It was immigrant workers such as these who took prisoner the contractor who failed to pay them their wages and kept his neck in a noose until Albion Clapp returned from Boston with police reinforcements.

Few facts are known about Augusto Bergonzoni's personal history. However, it is known that he was not a Roman Catholic. Unlike most of his fellow immigrants from Italy, Augusto arrived in the United States a Protestant.

Perhaps he was a Waldensian, an ancient Christian sect that was considered heretical by Roman Catholicism. In any event, Augusto became a nominal member of the Congregational Church. His wife Luisa, on the other hand, considered herself a "private" Catholic and when she died, was buried in Woodlawn cemetery where the plot had been consecrated according to the Roman Catholic rite.

This same religious division was also seen among the children with one son, Joseph who was also a Congregationalist and a Freemason, two sons Francis and Guyton who converted to Roman Catholicism, and daughter Mary who "always" considered herself a Roman Catholic. **(13)**

Augusto died in 1926, twenty years after his wife Luisa. Augusto had a penchant for spirited horses, having been a sulky driver at Sunnyside (Speen Street). On the occasion of his death, Augusto had been alighting from his carriage when his horse was spooked and bolted, causing him to be thrown to the ground where he received a fatal injury. **(14)**

Augusto was survived by his son Guyton A. who worked as a telephone repairer, a mechanic and chauffeur. He was also a veteran of the Spanish-American war and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery; Joseph, an accountant for the New England Telephone Company; Francis, a captain in the fire department and up for consideration as chief when injuries forced his retirement; **(15)** and Mary who married Albert Malaguti, a caretaker for the Roger Babson estate.

Upon reflection it seems clear that Augusto and Luisa Bergonzoni left their imprint, both materially and spiritually on their new town and country. Augusto physically helped to transform the Wellesley landscape through his own efforts and that of his workmen. Luisa raised and nurtured her family. The family did well by the standards of contemporary Italian immigrants – it had acquired modest property holdings, and its children were assimilated into the American society. Here was no fabulous fortune, but here was the success story of the Italian immigrant who came, who worked hard, and who remained on his own terms.

PEZZETTI – THE SECOND FAMILY

The second Italian family in Wellesley appears to be that of Vincent Pezzetti. Vincent arrived in Wellesley at approximately the same time as Augusto Bergonzoni, 1888 or 1889. He is listed as having paid poll taxes for the period 1890 to 1892. Pezzetti, like Bergonzoni, came from the Bologna region of Italy, and like Bergonzoni did not come directly to Wellesley. Initially he went to Plymouth, Massachusetts, and from there he came to Wellesley where he worked as a gardener for the wealthy on Abbott Road. Pezzetti had a large farm on Whiting Road (he may have leased this farm from the Whiting estate). He employed single Italian men who resided at Bergonzoni's "hotel." These workers raised hogs for slaughter, chickens and horses.

Pezzetti went on to own property that ran through to Rice Street that was later sold to Salvatore DeFazio, Sr., another early Italian family in Wellesley. **(16)** Such links among the early Wellesley Italians is not surprising, given their small numbers.

Vincent and his wife Dora (Doria) had five children (three girls and two boys) and adopted a niece whom the children regarded as their sister. The information that is available suggests that the second generation of Pezzetti, like the Bergonzoni, showed modest advances. One son, Vincent, Jr. went on to graduate from Lehigh University where he played alongside Jim Thorpe and became that university's first All-American

football player. (17) After graduation he became the general manager of Bethlehem's steel plant in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. All other family accomplishments seemed to pale beside his, according to his brother Charles who to this day proudly displays a scrapbook documenting his brother's accomplishments. (18)

A second son, Charles, became a bookkeeper at Fisher Business College in Boston. Eventually Charles transferred to Maugus Real Estate Trust Company of Wellesley and later to the new Hunnewell School where he retired after thirty years as a custodian.

Not much else is known about the family other than that Vincent Pezzetti, Sr. was a Roman Catholic, was literate, became a naturalized United States citizen and never returned to Italy.

CREMONINI – THE THIRD FAMILY

The third Italian family to establish roots in Wellesley was that of Alfonso Cremonini. He arrived in Wellesley in 1892 or 1893. Of him and his family a great deal is known in comparison to the others since one of his offspring was Margaret Cremonini Brown who took an active interest in discovering and preserving the family history.

Alfonso Cremonini like the others who preceded him was from the Bologna region of Italy. This fact suggests evidence of a "chain migration," that is, of some link which eventually brought these Bolognese to the same place. The exact nature of that link has not been discovered, but that the first three families all came from Bologna cannot be dismissed as coincidence, and more likely suggest the common phenomenon of "chain migration." Alfonso before leaving his native soil had worked as a migrant laborer for his soon-to-be wife's family. According to family tradition Amalia Vaccari, who became enamored of Alfonso, was a member of a well-to-do family. Perhaps a discrepancy in their social status was the motivating force which caused Alfonso to leave home for America.

After residing in Wellesley for nearly three years, Alfonso decided to return to Bologna to claim the hand of his beloved. But like many fellow immigrants, Alfonso found that the immigrant banker (the term is misleading, for these persons were simply shopkeepers, ship's agents etc.) with whom he had left his savings had absconded with it and those of other trusting Italians. Clearly such practices were not confined to the large urban areas where the immigrant population was more often at risk. Since this event occurred in Wellesley, at the corner of Washington and Forest Streets, the implication is that the suburban immigrant population was growing and these Italians were now also prey for the unscrupulous. Thus, Alfonso had to start saving again to purchase a steerage ticket instead of the third class ticket he had originally intended to buy.

Returning with his bride in 1896, Alfonso and Amalia went on to have six children: five girls and one boy. Alfonso worked as a gardener, doing lawn care for the wealthy. Here again one can surmise the linkage among the Bolognese which led to this type of work. Like other Italian immigrants Alfonso also went to work as a laborer for the railroad, the Boston and Albany. It was while working on the B.& A. that Alfonso came to the attention of Mr. Frederick Diehl who later hired him.

Cremonini worked for Diehl for nearly forty years. His assignments ranged from breaking in "green horses," that is, teaching them to pull a wagon, to digging out or "scooping out" building foundations in the days before machine excavation. Alfonso also helped to excavate foundations for builders such as Wallace Temple and Carl Danielson.

The labor was fatiguing and the workweek long. Arising at 4:30 A.M. to work an hour or so in his garden – there were seven mouths to feed including his own – he had breakfast and proceeded to Diehl's by 6:30

to feed and hitch the horses for the day's deliveries. In the winter all of Diehl's employees were used to harvest ice from the pond behind his property.

Many was the time that Alfonso and his team fell into the pond and he had to return home for a change of clothes before returning to the task at hand. Alfonso also worked on Saturdays and Sundays caring for the horses in order to supplement his weekly pay of \$9. Extra work, together with the contributions of his children (Margaret would later recall that the children always had jobs and turned their earnings into the family) eventually enabled Alfonso to start a "little business" of his own, in addition to his regular job. He loaned money to his friends, taking a second mortgage from them, which enabled them to purchase their own houses or to start a business. Through his efforts, Cremonini was not only able to feed his family but to achieve property ownership.

Cremonini himself had required assistance and received it from Frederick Diehl. Diehl frequently aided his workers by supplying the building materials as well as taking on their mortgages. In Alfonso's case, he went even further. Having selected his property, Alfonso applied to the Wellesley Co-operative Bank for a mortgage only to learn that the title to the property was not clear. A previous owner had failed to pay taxes for the years 1869, 1870 and 1871. Thus the title had to be cleared through the land court. Diehl offered to lend the building materials while the matter was pending, confident that it would ultimately be resolved in Cremonini's favor. No doubt this confidence resulted from the fact that the seller was Albion Clapp, a prominent townsman who was still alive and therefore liable.

Within the Cremonini history there is even some information on the role of the Italian woman. Margaret described her mother Amalia as a "jewel, a lady, a true Christian, our teacher," and mysteriously, "our buffer" Buffer from whom? Buffer from what? (19) According to Margaret's recollection, Amalia was a woman respected by the whole community. In addition to fulfilling the usual motherly tasks of making the children's clothing, baking bread, making all of the family's pasta and caring for the family when it was ill. Amalia served as an interpreter for the Wellesley Friendly Aid Society. She was conversant not only in the "real Italian" but several dialects as well. As such she was much in demand by the town physicians who attended Italian patients. She refused any fee for her efforts.

Amalia also worked as a midwife and nurse often caring for children when their mothers were sick. When one such mother dies from the influenza in 1918, she took the eighteen month old son home and cared for him until he was nine years old. At the time of her death in 1948, eight young men whom she had helped in this manner served as her pallbearers.

Amalia also served as a sometime hostess to the Italian community of Wellesley. In addition to lending the family's silver, table linen and even curtain stretchers when friends and neighbors had weddings, christenings and funerals, Mrs. Cremonini also hosted what were called "kitchen dances." In the days before the organization of the Reliance Club, the town's first Italian social club, Italians such as the Cremonini who had kitchens or dining rooms large enough to accommodate the event would host dances. The Cremonini dining room was a favorite since it ran the whole length of the house. At these affairs the Italians would dance to the accordion music of Caesar Tangerini, and would otherwise socialize.

The Cremonini had six children, five girls and one boy, in addition to those whom Amalia cared for when the need arose. (20) A brief glance at the second and third generation Cremonini suggests the rate of assimilation and the modest gains which this family made. Of the three daughters who married, two married non-Italians. The daughters worked in clerical positions at one time or another in their lives. Margaret worked at Diehl's for forty-five years, five years longer than her father's total. One daughter, Helen, graduated from Framingham Union Hospital as a nurse, where she also worked until her death from pneumonia in 1936 at the age of twenty-eight.

The only son, Augustus, did marry a woman of Italian extraction and conducted his own plastering business in Wellesley for fifty-five years. Such movement from the unskilled labor of Alfonso to the skilled trade of Augustus was typical of Italian mobility. Equally typical was the more rapid advance of the third generation (21) as can be observed in the Cremonini family.

Augustus Jr. and Robert, sons of Augustus are college educated and high level managers of B.F.I. Industries and the DuPont Corporation respectively. (22) George Burton Palmer, son of Mary, became an anesthesiologist, associated with the Hunt Memorial Hospital of Danvers, Massachusetts. Rose Locatelli became the chairman of the Preservation of Antiques Department of the Wellesley Hill's Woman's Club.

CONCLUSION

The first three families to settle in Wellesley reflected the Italian immigration to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century in several ways. They reflected the common phenomenon of the chain migration, whereby a link of origination was established among a group of immigrants to a particular place. The Bergonzoni, Pezzetti and Cremonini all came from the Bologna region of Italy. Why Bergonzoni decided to settle in Wellesley and start the chain is unknown. Equally unknown is how and why the Pezzetti and Cremonini followed; but the Bolognese link is clear and is strong evidence of a connection.

Also representative of the Italian experience in the United States is the fact that the second generation of these families assimilated and improved on the social positions of the fathers. Augustus Cremonini, who established himself as a skilled tradesman, typifies the children of Italians who went from unskilled blue collar trades to skilled blue collar trades. Less typical were the children who either went on to college, as in the case of Vincent Pezzetti, Jr., or the daughters who went on to work in clerical positions. Generally, second generation Italian Americans did not advance into white collar positions as quickly as these children did. The children of Italian immigrants labored long under a cultural and economic legacy which slowed their progress through American society. (23)

Despite these examples which suggest that the first three families were representative of the Italian experience, the over-all conclusion is that the Bergonzoni, Pezzetti and Cremonini were atypical of the late nineteenth century Italian immigration. While most of the Italians who left in the 1880's and 1890's were from southern Italy and Sicily, these families were from the north. Northern Italians, though numerous, definitely did not dominate this phase of the Italian immigrations.

The men who headed these families quickly established themselves as property owners and men of modest means. In the case of Bergonzoni, there is very strong evidence that he was a padrone, thus indicating distance from the mass of his fellow Italians. As a padrone he not only directed their labors and profited from them, but presumably was in that enviable position because somehow he had gained a knowledge and understanding of the society that they did not.

Finally, at least one of the, again Bergonzoni, was a non-Catholic. Indeed, he may actually have emigrated from Italy as such. If so, this was a rarer phenomenon than those who when they arrived in the United States were proselytized by the various Protestant denominations and sometimes converted. Sketchy evidence suggests that this minority of the immigrant Italian population may have assimilated more quickly than the rest of their fellows.

A possible explanation for this unrepresentative Italian experience may be because it occurred in Wellesley. Since there were so few Italians in Wellesley, compared to the densely populated urban areas, these and other Italians were less insulated from the host society. They were more likely to absorb American

culture, as defined in the Wellesley suburb, and to absorb it much more quickly. Such an explanation is of course conjectural since a larger study of the Wellesley Italians would be necessary to confirm it.

Whatever their place in history, the Bergonzoni, Pezzetti and Cremonini made their mark on the town of Wellesley. Its significance was not such as to merit mention in any of the official town histories, but rather the significance of the thousands of untold Italian immigrants who made their way to the United States, lived their lives and raised their families. The Bergonzoni, Pezzetti and Cremonini, like those who preceded and followed, helped to transform the country. By their physical labors they helped build the cities and towns. By their presence they contributed to the diversity of this society. By their values and families they helped shape the ethos of the United States. In their quiet unassuming lives these first three Italian families symbolized the contributions of the Italians and their fellow immigrants not only to Wellesley, but to America.”

END NOTES

1. Second Codicil to the Last Will and Testament of Margaret R. Brown, November 5, 1982.
2. Elizabeth M. Hinchliffe, Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds of Corn (Wellesley: Town of Wellesley, 1981), pp 50-51
3. Ibid., 50,52.
4. Ibid., 53
5. Ibid., 63
6. Wellesley Historical Society, Brown papers.
7. Wellesley Historical Society, Brown papers; also, Book 630, p. 314, Norfolk County Registry of Deeds, lots 114, 115, 116, 131, 132 plan in book 222.
8. Hinchliffe, Five Pounds, p.57
9. Wellesley Historical Society, Brown papers.
10. Town of Wellesley Directory, 1896
11. Luciano J. Iorizzo and Salvatore Mondelio, The Italian Americans, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pp 164-183)
12. Wellesley Historical Society, Brown papers.
13. Mrs. Louise Slamin, Interview with Rosario J. Tosiello, January 14, 1988.
14. Ibid
15. Letter from Louise Slamin to Rosario J. Tosiello., August 1, 1988.
16. Wellesley Historical Society, Brown papers.
17. On January 26, 1961, Vincent Jr. was elected to the National Football Hall of Fame.
18. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pezzetti, interview with Rosario J. Tosiello, January 14, 1988.

19. Possibly Amalia was a buffer from Alfonso's stern, single-minded work ethic which placed no value on "feminine frivolity." Letter from Mrs. August Cremonini to Rosario J. Tosiello, August 1, 1988.
20. Wellesley Historical Society, Brown papers.
21. See Thomas Kessner, The Golden Door (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
22. Letter from Mrs. August Cremonini to Rosario J. Tosiello, August 1, 1988.
23. See Kessner, The Golden Door

REMINISCENCES...

Photo caption #1: Augusto Bergonzoni with his horse, Dandy, around 1920 (photo courtesy of Louise Slamin)

Photo caption #2: Vincent Pezzetti (photo courtesy of Charles Pezzetti)

Photo caption #3: Amalia and Alfonso Cremonini around 1920 (photo courtesy of Augustus and Genevieve Cremonini)

- N) "Tosiello to speak at Historical Society", *Townsmen*; October 26, 1989, Page 9

"The Wellesley Historical Society on Sunday, Nov 5 at 2:30 p.m. will present a brief talk entitled "Retrieving Wellesley's Italian Past: Trials and Triumphs" by Dr. Rosario J. Tosiello. Dr. Tosiello will describe the problems in researching and writing "*A History of the First Three Families from Northern Italy to settle in the Town of Wellesley*, which was commissioned by the Historical Society. Dr. Tosiello received his Ph.D. in history from Boston University and is currently Professor of History at Pine Manor College. He has been a Newcomen Fellow in Business History at the Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University and the recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for Humanities. Dr. Tosiello's current project is an extended article tentatively entitled "A Question of Loyalty" on the treatment of Italians in the United States during World War II."

- O) "Italian American Contributions", Tere Tedesco, *Townsmen*; March 18, 1993, Page 5

"The following guest column was written by Tere Tedesco, an artist and Wellesley resident who is actively involved in the planning of the annual World of Wellesley festival.

Americans are actively concerned with how our communities respond economically and socially to immigration and different cultural traditions. The broad-brush overview of how the earliest Italians in town immigrated, settled and helped develop Wellesley provides an understanding of the process, and perhaps a guide to the future. The collective contribution of this town's various ethnic groups to the fabric of Wellesley's society underscores the value of cultural diversity.

In preparation of the World of Wellesley celebration to be held this fall, I recently met with several prominent residents who are of Italian heritage. Our mission was to explore their particular community's contribution to this community. What resulted was a far-ranging and rather enlightening discussion.

Many of the late 19th century immigrants came from northern Italy, an area with a great tradition of stone construction. By offering stone cutting, ice cutting, and other work to the immigrants even before they left Italy, William Diehl, Wellesley's largest business owner, served the town by helping to build it, these residents told me.

The group that was assemble to talk to me about the contributions Italian-Americans have made to Wellesley over the years comprise some rather prominent figures from around town. Among them were Bruno Mortarelli, a purchasing agent with Diehl's; Tory DeFazio, owner of The Windsor Press; Joe Grignaffini, a local developer and building; and Felix Juliani, an insurance agent who has held several elected town posts over the years. Mortarelli is fiercely loyal to his employer, the company that helped his parents and others establish themselves as a cohesive community while fulfilling its social responsibilities. Diehl had appreciated the talents and values of the Italians, which can still be found despite assimilation into society.

DeFazio, president of the Wellesley Historical Society, praises the past. Storytelling is becoming a lost art, he says because people no longer have the leisure time for many casual visits. However, oral history is one means by which culture is continued.

Sharing stories at the dinner table is a major part of the Italian culture. DeFazio says that although it is a fading tradition, sharing dinner with the entire family once a day is extremely important.

Recreation is also important to the cohesiveness of the Italian community. The Italo-American Club is a place where people can gather to play bocce or scana. And a second club – the Reliance Club – was established recently in order to accommodate the growing needs of the community.

Have the members of the Italian culture always enjoyed their position in society? Clearly, it has been an uphill climb.

“Do you know how the word ‘wop’ originated?” Mortarelli asks. “It means ‘without passport.’” He tells of a time when Italian immigrants would stand in line waiting for the customs officers to direct them to the correct line. They would say, “You, without the passport, stand here (or there).”

They've come a long way from there, of course. And they have shared certain keys to their success. “It is hard work and strong family values that is distinctly to our benefit.” Says Grignaffini. “With these values we accomplish something. With the sense of accomplishment, our sense of pride for self and eventually for the United States is enhanced. Although most of the women worked in the home, they contributed by making baskets, sewing, and other work.”

Quite a bit more was done in the home in the past. Juliani recalls that he used to raise chickens and at one time had 100 of them. He also raised pigs, goats, rabbits and other animals. He and other members of the group chuckled at the new laws enforcing the licensing of dogs. How different it is!

Lou Grignaffini II says he believes in the same values that his parents and grandparents stressed so much. Although he descends from several cultures, he is most proud of being Italian. Sadly, during WWII, denial rather than pride in an Italian heritage was not uncommon. And despite the contributions made to Wellesley, some people still envision the “mafia” when they think “Italian-American.”

Being third generation Italian, DeFazio admits that he is more American than Italian-American, but he is very proud of his beginnings. “People are individuals, regardless of their origins. I don’t particularly see myself as Italian.” he says. Yet the cultural continuity of values which contributed to the building of Wellesley persists. The first food market serving the community was operated by DeFazio’s grandparents. His father, who worked closely with Roger Babson, started The Windsor Press which DeFazio now operates.

Would you help new immigrants establish themselves in town? One Italian-American responded, “Yes, if they work hard and contribute to society by being productive. Many times we worked seven days a week, working hard to build what we have.”

An appreciation of the value of the Italian-American contributions to Wellesley may help us better assess the role of immigration and cultural diversity today.”

P) “The Italians in Boston” Stephen Puleo, Lecture hosted by Wellesley Historical Society; October 6, 2019

“Well-known historian and author, Stephen Puleo, will discuss the history of Italian immigration to Boston from its inception in the 19th Century right up to the present day. He will focus, in particular, on the role of the North End of Boston in the Italians; remarkable rise from “rags to riches.” *Lecture co-sponsored by the Council on Aging Lecture Series and Christine Mayer*”

The program attracted the largest audience in recent memory. To see the Wellesley Media production (55m/20s) go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0_nxgYKkjk