



# The Officers' Log

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## PBS CONCEDES

In the last Log (#44) we noted how a PBS television special on jazz great Cab Calloway hit a nerve when an on-screen scholar noted that the Cotton Club in New York's Harlem was "owned by Italian mafia gangsters." Our Institute president, Bill Dal Cerro, a jazz expert, dashed off a letter to the documentary producer and to PBS questioning them for such a falsification of history. In fact, the club was owned by an English American gangster named Owney Madden. The scholar fully admitted that he erred and knew better, stating that Italian stereotypes had short-circuited his memory.

Caught in a mistake and cover-up, our Institute demanded that the documentary be reedited for future broadcasts around the country. The following certified letter from PBS affiliate WNET in New York was received by us.

*"The corrected version of American Masters Cab Calloway: Sketches is being re-fed to the 350+ PBS affiliate stations today (May 31st). It is this version, and only this version, that will now be available for rebroadcasts of the program."* Susan Lacy, Executive Producer

Once again, this proves that the scarlet letter of *The Godfather* is still borne by Americans of Italian heritage. Bill Dal Cerro's persistence and the surprising honesty of these media folks lay bare the depth of such stigma. The sources of this propaganda continue to pollute the media as "art." Says Bill Dal Cerro, "The producers at PBS should be commended for treating our concerns with respect—a rarity. And although we can claim it as a small victory, the beast of stereotyping is still amongst us." \*\*\*\*



## YO, IT-LY!

by Bill Dal Cerro, President

During a recent trip to Italy, I found some downtime in Florence to turn on my hotel television. It is always interesting to me to see how the outside world, especially Italy, views other cultures.



I could find very little American programming, at least on the 50 or so stations hooked up to my hotel room. But one turned up very clearly: *Jersey Shore*, the MTV reality show about a handful of twentysomething Italian Americans from New Jersey—many of whom are neither fully Italian, are not from New Jersey, or who were hand-picked to mirror loud Italian stereotypes.

To make things worse, these episodes were the set-in-Italy ones  
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**Owney "The Killer" Madden (1930s)**- Owney Madden was a first of his kind in Hell's Kitchen. He dressed in expensive suits and was well known in New York's high society. He controlled bootleg liquor, nightclubs, taxicabs, laundries, and cloak and cigarette concessions. He also controlled interest in the very popular Cotton Club in Harlem and a piece of heavyweight boxing champion Primo Carnera. In 1931, he was made a representative of the Irish Mob in New York by Lucky Luciano. It was not long before someone from HK challenged his reign. Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll was the greatest threat to Madden. Madden got him on February 8, 1932. Coll was shot to death. Madden was imprisoned in 1933 for 12 months and after his release he retired to Hot Springs, Arkansas. (Wikipedia)



## COMING SOON

We are working on the next issue of *The Italic Way* and hope to get it out mid-summer. As usual, it will be filled with important insights into our heritage and Italy.

In the meantime, check out our on-line archives for any past issues you might have missed.

## CALL TO ALMS!

We like to think that the Italic Institute is a cutting-edge organization. But our reach and effectiveness is limited by our checkbook balance. However, that hasn't stopped us from going toe-to-toe with the media or academia in defense of the Italian heritage.

It hasn't slowed up our push to restore the classical Italian heritage within our community. And we do it without employees, rented offices or business loans. One Italian American organization in Washington DC maintains a building full of employees headed by a \$300,000 per year director to keep its wheels spinning. Is that what Italian Americans really need?

Underwrite the Italic Institute and you can change things. We dedicate our time for the common good. Give us the tools to keep us in the forefront.

## We're NOT Party Planners

Heritage is too important to be left to social-charity organizations.

If you take your heritage seriously you need the Italic Institute.

### We are the Alternative!

- Enroll the person below as a member (\$50 check enclosed)
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# GRISTINA HONORED

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Institute, the Council of Governors chose to award its Silver Medallion to co-founder Stefano Gristina.

In retirement in Upstate New York, Stefano can look back on some formidable accomplishments. He emigrated with his wife Anna and sons Dario, Danny, and David from Catania, Sicily, in 1981. As an electrical expert who had his own business and taught at the Archimedes School in Catania, Stefano came to New York and worked his way up to found an innovative consulting firm and electrical contracting business.



Stefano "Steve" Gristina, right, is awarded the Silver Medallion by John Mancini in commemoration of his co-founding of the Italic Institute .

In 1983, he met John Mancini and the two eventually founded the Italic Institute of America in 1987 along with petroleum executive Carl Pescosolido. He was drawn to the undertaking when he observed how Italian Americans continued to live in an immigrant frame of mind, a time capsule of an older mentality, as he often says. Stefano gave our Institute its modern Italian perspective.

To inaugurate the Institute, Steve and John journeyed to Rome in 1987, bringing the world's attention to the 2,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roman Peace (*Pax Romana*) at the Altar of Peace, along the Tiber River. It was consecrated to Emperor Augustus by the Roman Senate on July 4, 13 B.C. The ceremony on July 4, 1987 launched the Italic Institute and our Classical Italian Movement.

Stefano and Anna enjoy eleven grandchildren. Their sons carry on the family businesses and the oldest, Dario, is running for the New York State Assembly. Their roots in America now run deep. *Auguri Stefano!*

# GETTING INK

It has been a productive month in the media world for our Chairman Rosario Iaconis. He managed to get published in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and Long Island's *Newsday*. We have inserted a summary copy in this Log. Enjoy!

## CENSUS COUNT

The 2010 Census figures are out and Italian Americans are still the fifth largest ethnic group. Just remember that the count reflects only those folks who admit to being ethnic. There are lots of people who lost all affection for their motherlands and there are those who are so well mixed that they don't know what they are. But just judging by these numbers not everyone came to escape religious or political freedom. Poverty must have been the prime mover. Italians freely admit it.

What is also interesting is that lots of people still claim European roots, even though the media packages us as uniquely "ethnic." So, next time someone notices your Italian surname to point out your hyphenation, ask them where their surname came from. And don't let them tell you they are an "American mutt." Everyone is hyphenated and the surname reveals the source. Most people know what their real names were before Ellis Island.

German.....	49.8 million
Irish.....	35.8
Mexican.....	31.8
English.....	27.4
Italian.....	17.6
Jewish(multi-ethnic)....	6.5

## NEW RESEARCHER



We welcome new member Joseph D'Alelio of Boston, MA, to the Institute. Joseph is an avid researcher, fluent in Italian. He has already generated extensive material for our library. He is especially geared to combatting disinformation regarding Italy's role in the First World War.

# HOLOCAUST PROJECT DRAFTED

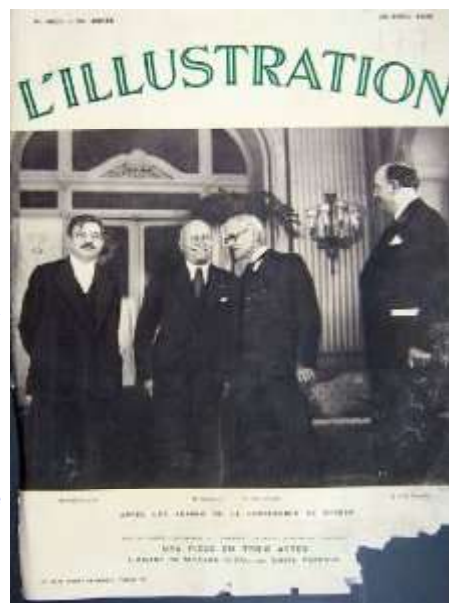
Our research into Italy's role during the Holocaust is substantially complete, and is tentatively titled *Italy and the Holocaust, Between the Darkness and the Light 1933 - 1945*.

This is the first time anyone has connected the dots of Italy's dealing with the Jews of Italy, Europe, and Africa. It details how Italy shielded 200,000 Austrian Jews from Nazi clutches before the Second World War, how Italy stopped Hitler in 1934 and tried to bring Great Britain and France into a strategic bloc to contain Germany, how the Italian occupation of Ethiopia benefited 40,000 Beta Israel (Falasha Jews), how Italy took in Jewish refugees while Europe was at war and Fascist Italy was allied to Nazi Germany, how Italy protected the Jews from its Axis allies in occupied Europe. But we also document Italy's shameful Racial Laws of 1938 and the German occupation of Mussolini's puppet state that led to the deportation of Italian Jews.

Originally planned as an exhibit for the Holocaust Museum on Long Island, the project is too big for the room it was to use. Curator John Mancini would like to complete the project first as a "White Paper" to be published in magazine format and then to create the abbreviated storyboards for exhibit purposes. "Museum exhibits need to be condensed for ease of reading and to keep viewers' interest," says Mancini. "The important thing at the moment is to see the whole story on paper first." Once again, the Italic Institute is taking the lead.

An example of the little known political atmosphere in Europe during the 1930s: a French magazine cover showing the Stresa Conference, convened by Mussolini in 1935 to protect Austria and to contain Nazi Germany.

The British violated the understanding less than two months later with the Anglo-German Naval Treaty.



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from last season, where our intrepid young players were allowed to roam free in Florence. Although one of the cast members, Vinny, actually spoke some Italian and expressed true pride and awe in visiting the “Motherland,” as he called it, the rest of them couldn’t wait to unpack in order to hit the local bars and do what they do best: dance, get drunk, fight, and try to fornicate.

One example of the show’s insight into Italic culture: As a group of the girls walked past the magnificent Il Duomo in Florence (Santa Maria del Fiore), one asked, “Hey, is this the Vatican?” To which the other replied, “I think so. It’s pretty!” (Unlike most shows in Italy, *Jersey Shore* was left undubbed—that is, you could hear the characters’ actual annoying voices, yet subtitled in Italian to clarify their cluelessness.)

The fact that *Jersey Show* even made it on air in America is a

testament to the utter failure of Italian American organizations and academicians in protecting or promoting our culture. Shows about similar American groups wouldn’t have made it past the discussion, let alone production stage, and rightly so. But so little are Italian Americans, or Italic culture, respected in the American mainstream media that a show like *Jersey Shore* is allowed to cross the Atlantic.

On the plus side, I did find another American show a few days later (dubbed into Italian): a documentary about Sacco and Vanzetti, the Boston anarchists electrocuted in 1927 after a kangaroo trial, a case that made world headlines. Alas, the bigotry that led to Sacco and Vanzetti’s executions still exists, albeit in a “harmless” form via popular entertainment.

And, by the way, if you look for souvenirs in Italy, chances are the shops are run by Chinese.

## VISIT US ON-LINE

For those of you who may have joined us late, you now have an opportunity to read all the old issues of *The Italic Way* on-line. Our Webmaster Tony Buttita in Chicago has just installed a search engine on our homepage ([www.italic.org](http://www.italic.org)). You can find issues back to the first one in 1988. Search for a whole issue or look up a fact – just type in a keyword or subject.

Plans are in the works to house on-line our collection of the 1930s Italian American magazine *Atlantica*. When completed, it will really take you back for a feel of what the community was producing before the food, travel, and fashion craze.

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**Arris Magnis Nostris!** (To our great friends!)  
Welcome to a new way of appreciating the total Italic heritage!

