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Italia

NEWSLETTER of the ITALIAN WORKMEN'S CLUB

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President's Message

by Joe Tripalin



Festa 2025 is in the books and what a success it was! We were blessed with perfect weather and records were set for attendance and revenue for a two-day event. In fact, we were very close to the all-time records from a three-day Festa. Don Mash and the admissions crew got over 5,000 people through admissions over the two days, which is amazing. All the revenue receipts are not totaled yet, but I believe the total will be close to the three-day Festa record of \$127,000. John Benjamin, Dan Malone, and Anthony Gatti were responsible for accounting for this money, and they were able to keep up as the dollars poured in. They managed to categorize the money to the right areas and record the details so we can analyze the event from a cash



Festa: Great food, fine wine and sunshine

standpoint, this is no easy task. At times they said it seemed like a flood of cash.

Of course, none of this would be possible without your help and the help of the many family members and friends who pitched in to fill all the work shifts. Many members worked more than one shift and often on both days. Thank you for

that effort. We can be proud of the great event we produced.

Saturday and Sunday were a bit of a whirlwind for me, with many fun things happening throughout the day. I had more than one person say how much they enjoyed Festa and it was going to

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Festivals and Italy



By Tom Smith

Celebrating our annual Festa Italia made me think about all the festivals and carnivals I've been to over the years, and wonder where the idea of festivals came from, what the origin of having festivals might be? A little digging revealed that for centuries festivals have been a part of Italian culture. Both religious and secular in origin, they were a way to honor cultural events, celebrate special dates and recognize saints. Festivals have served to offer insights into the country's history, art, culture, and traditions.

Italian festivals have roots deep in history, blending religious, pagan, and historical elements. A *sagra*, with its origins in old country fairs, is a local festival celebrating an annual event, like the patron saint of a town, a harvest, or the consecration of a church. It might include a pageant, food and drink, a sporting event, or the historical recreation of some event. There are many festivals celebrated across Italy. Festivals like Carnevale and La Festa della Repubblica are prime examples of how historical events and religious observances are woven into Italian culture.

For example, Carnevale dates back to Roman times and occurred before Lent, with a period of feasting and celebration. It is celebrated in many parts of Italy but most famously in Venice, where weeks-long festivities are characterized by costumes, elaborate masks (handcrafted from paper mache with elaborate designs involving feathers and ribbons), and parades. The masks were originally used to conceal the identities of individuals, breaking down social barriers and allowing people from different classes to celebrate together.



June 2nd is a national holiday in Italy, similar to Independence Day in the United States, celebrating the official formation of the Republic of Italy after World War II. *La Festa Della Repubblica* commemorates the day in 1946 when Italians voted to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic. A referendum held on June 2nd and 3rd resulted in a majority of Italians voting for a republic. This festival includes

official ceremonies, military parades, and a variety of events held across the country to reflect its democratic heritage.

There are festivals across Italy for patron saints' days and regional festivals. Many cities celebrate their patron saint with a festival. On June 29th each year Rome celebrates St. Peter and St. Paul (San Pietro and San Paolo) with a spectacular fireworks display over Castel Sant'Angelo. Saint Januarius (San Gennaro), the patron saint of Naples, is famous for the "miracle of the blood," where his dried blood liquefies (considered a good omen for the city) three times a year...most notably on his feast day September 19th. The patron saint of Milan, St. Ambrose



Saint Anthony

(Sant'Ambrogio), a 4th century bishop known for his role in establishing Milan as a center of Christianity, is honored on his feast day, December 7th each year with religious services in the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio. And St. Anthony of Padua (Sant'Antonio da Padova) is one of the saints well known around the world as the "saint of lost things," who people often turn to for help in finding something they have lost (his feast day is celebrated in Padua each June 13th).

The Regatta of the Ancient Maritime Republics is a festival featuring a historic boat race between the four former powers that controlled the seas around Italy: Amalfi, Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. The race is to determine which of these maritime republics will achieve greatness again, with the location for the race rotating among them each year. Each boat (called a Gozzi), is rowed by a team of eight rowers plus a coxswain, dressed in traditional medieval costumes. The boats are 15 meters long, originally made of wood but today fashioned from fiberglass. They are distinguished by different colors and symbols for each Republic: red with an eagle for Pisa, white with a dragon for Genoa, green with a winged lion for Venice, and blue with a winged horse for Amalfi. The galleons compete to win the gold and silver trophy made by Scuola Orafa Fiorentina, to be kept by the winning team until the next year's race.



Festivals continued



The Palio of Siena is one of the most well known and exciting historic festivals in Italy. Contestants from the 17 neighborhoods (*contrades*) of Siena compete in a horse race for the *palio*, which is a banner awarded to the winner. The race is held in Siena's fan-shaped main square, the Piazza del

Campo. A lottery is held 20 days before an initial race to draw ten riders to compete in the first round on July 2nd. A second race is held on August 16th that includes three riders from the July race and the additional seven riders. Race days begin with special masses, trial runs by the jockeys, and blessings of the horses. The winner takes home the prized palio.

The Battle of the Oranges is a festival held in Ivrea in Northern Italy during the Carnival season. This festival seems to date back to a revolt during medieval times. Legend has it that the "battle" represents a historic fight between the townsfolk and a tyrant. In the three days leading up to Fat Tuesday people gather for the largest organized food fight in Italy. Participants are divided into two groups, with those in carriages symbolizing the forces of the tyrant and those on foot representing the townsfolk. The "battle" then ensues with an intense exchange of oranges in an orange-throwing frenzy. As many as 7,000 people flock to the streets to take part, throwing over 600 tons of oranges (approximately 4.2 million oranges). It should be noted that these oranges are not suitable for human consumption.



Italy does indeed have a rich history of festivals and celebrations. But here at home, Festa Italia is a celebration like no other. From its humble beginnings going back to Brittingham Park, to the home it has found at McKee Farms Park for so many years, Festa brings all that is good in celebrating our Italian heritage...from the culture tent and cooking demonstrations to food, music, and fun for all.

President's Message continued

be on their calendar for 2026. The kids' games and face painting led by Mark Salerno were special. Wayne the Wizard did his magic show, and the kids loved it along with the kids games and prizes. I saw many children running around with tiger faces, they looked amazing, and I know the parents appreciated it. Gary Berger set up the bocce activities and they were a big hit, with many people coming to our event to learn to play bocce or to participate in a tournament. Jim LeTourneau and Ron Gatti (also Ron's wife Debbie) worked hard to make the culture tent a place filled with activity. We had two very well attended cooking demonstrations. Giovanni Novella from Bar Corallini and Salvatore DiScala from Naples 15 did wonderful demonstrations. Salvatore made it fun by having some of the food producers from Italy live on his Ipad. Not sure if anyone in the audience could see them, but Salvatore translated what they shared. These unique offerings make our event different and special. Let's not forget Catholic Mass on Sunday morning.

I point out the special things above, that we do, because I think they set our event apart from other outdoor festivals. We make the culture-heritage an important part of what we deliver at Festa and I think people appreciate it. Obviously, the food we prepare helps reinforce the culture-heritage theme. Travis Hunter and the many members that worked in the



Photo: Bocce competition

pasta tent did an awesome job. We probably served several thousand meals and people had a wonderful taste of Italy. Spaghetti and meatballs, salad, Italian beef, arancini, mozzarella sticks and many other wonderful food options help set us apart from other events. The IAWC had cookies and cannoli and basically sold out of everything. With the many great food options, no one went home hungry. I am amazed how Travis and the folks in the food area managed to keep up and keep the lines short even at dinnertime when everyone is lining up for a spaghetti dinner all the while dealing with a nervous president who was worried we would run out of food.

Mike Cammilleri put together a great entertainment package with the VO5's and the Jimmys as headliners drawing good crowds of their followers while offering great entertainment. I know we sold a

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Italia

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President's Message continued

lot of beer and wine. We had some important events in or near the beer tent. The pasta eating contest is always fun and the contestants give it their all. We and the IAWC recognized long-serving members, saying thanks for helping to build our clubs to where they are today. The Italian dancers were back and performed on the main stage and the audience appreciated their efforts.

Let's not forget the work that started months ago to make Festa happen. Dan Dyer obtained licenses and permits and worked through the many bureaucratic steps (some frustrating) to allow Festa to operate. David Rizzo worked with sponsors that brought in almost \$10,000 in sponsorships. He also handled all the marketing and media connections to provide us some terrific media coverage before and during the event. Ross DePaola assisted with information, video, and pictures. Al Falashi handled all the social media outreach, and I know that I saw many advertisements for Festa on Facebook and other channels. The beverage committee, Frank Alfano, Tom Smith, and Ralph Russo worked with Southern Italy Imports, Wisconsin Distributors, and Coke to ensure we had a great selection of wine, beer, and soda. Ralph stood by at the soda tent on Saturday and Sunday to make sure they were well stocked with soda and ice. Another very important source of income for Festa was the raffle. John Caliva and Phil



Cooking demonstration packs the culture tent



Rare Element performs on music stage

Clementi did a terrific job with the raffle and it raised record amounts of money. Finally, hats off to Jack Parrino, Butch Pullara, and Charlie Belz who did a million things to get things delivered, set up, and ready to go for the opening

of Festa. Jack and Butch worked all day, every day, Thursday through Monday, extraordinary! Oh, somehow Butch managed to fix the Artic Ice trailer and got it

Continued next page



running after the refrigeration guy thought he had it fixed.

I want to single out Jim DiUlio, Festa co-chair, for his efforts in leading our successful event. Jim worked countless hours on a million details, think SignUp Genius as one example, to ensure a successful Festa. Always calm and supportive, he managed to bring all these things mentioned above together in an extremely successful event. In fact, Jim has been the Festa co-chair on the two most successful Festa's we've ever had, one a three day event a couple of years ago and Festa 2025. Great job Jim!!!

As I look back on Saturday and Sunday, I saw many smiling faces of those attending our event. That told me we were hitting all the right notes. I didn't have one complaint. We did a terrific job, had a wonderful Festa, and thank you for your efforts to make it a success.

On a different note, next month we will be celebrating the unveiling (yes, I know it is already up on the front of the building) of the plaque

commemorating the addition of building on the National Register of Historic Places. The event is scheduled for 5pm Tuesday July 15th (a regular member meeting night) in front of the club. I expect it will be chaotic with news media coverage, the mayor, county executive, alders and our members all standing in front of the building. We will get a police car to block a lane of traffic so we can spill out into the street a bit without getting run over. After the dedication, we will have a reception with some appetizers and cake. We will follow this with our regular monthly meeting. If you can be there by 5pm you are welcome to participate, direct traffic, enjoy the event.

Joe ■■



Photos clockwise from top left:

How to make fresh pasta

Picking out a prize at kids' games

Festa Queen - Cindy Parisi

2025 scholarship recipients: Mike Lumina, Biagio Scalissi Isabelle Jensen, Emelia Shell, Samarah Morrison, Molly Lenies and Terry Parisi (not all winners pictured)

Things I didn't Know 4-C:

We end the chapter summaries of John Arthur Valentine's thesis on the Italian community of Madison with an exploration of the effects the Reverend Antonio Parroni and his Italian Methodist Church had on the "Bush" neighborhood, finalized with an Epilogue summary of the findings of Valentine's research of Madison's Italians revealing more.

Written and edited by Prof. Jim LeTourneau, IWC

John Arthur Valentine, recollecting the influence the Reverend Antonio Parroni had on the "Bush", could justifiably wonder what sort of preparation was involved in the training of an Italian infantry officer, submarine commander and Ph.D. engineer which would qualify him for American evangelic work. Nevertheless, according to Valentine, he possessed all the human compassion and understanding requisite for the adequate fulfillment of his religious role. In fact, his humanitarian instincts far transcended the defined pastoral duties of his small Protestant Church smack in the middle of the Sicilian-Italian part of Madison. It was this quality which permitted his unusual success.

When he assumed leadership of Madison's Italian Methodist Church in 1929, bootlegging, murder and extortion were still rampant in "the Bush". Rev. Parroni, like Rev. Pallotta before him, was also threatened. Refusing to cooperate, he responded in kind with a threat of his own, according to his son Albert Parroni, in a 1966 interview with Valentine. At thirty-five, Rev. Parroni was a stockily built, aggressive man and his courageous character was present for all to see. His left cheek was marked



Rev. Antonio Parroni

by a scar caused by a double shrapnel wound he sustained while serving in the Italian Army during World War I. Unable to intimidate him, the local hoodlums realized the futility of their extortionist attempts and never bothered him again.

The first decade of Rev. Parroni's tenure was marked by local unemployment, poverty and a general economic depression. He proved to be a very valuable asset to the Italian community during those trying times and it was during this period, 1929-1940, that the Italian Methodist Church realized its greatest gains with membership tripling to over 340 souls. Although it was the Albanians who flocked to the Protestant Church,

other Italians took part as well but very few actually joined on a permanent basis.

Valentine admitted it was quite impossible to determine exactly how many Catholic Sicilians joined Parroni's Church. But he believed the number was considerable-especially during the Depression. He wrote that, when World War II brought prosperity, most returned to Catholicism. There was an almost direct correlation between economic conditions of the times and the membership of Parroni's Church, meaning; economic severity increased membership and, conversely, economic prosperity decreased it.

The reasons for the rapid membership growth were the extreme economic conditions of the times and Parroni's ability to help his community. Without dwelling on the obvious, Valentine wrote, the Italians were extremely hard hit by the Great Depression. At one time or another, fully three-fourths of all the families in the Italian community were either on private or government relief rolls. These economic conditions were further compounded by ominous social ramifications.

Crime rates increased, family conflicts and generational differences grew. The Italian men, being unemployed, were losing their traditional patriarchal

family role. And, finally, second generation Italian-Americans were reaching maturity. After learning American values and dreams in public schools, they were faced with the hard realities of unemployment, poverty and entrenched discrimination.

According to Valentine, many individuals and agencies sought to aid the Italians, but Rev. Parroni was undoubtedly the benefactor, par excellence. Whereas most were fearful of “pauperizing” the Italians (*characterizing them as down-and-out, poor or indigent*), Parroni had little concern. For example, nearby Neighborhood House would charge one penny for locals to see a movie, believing it best not to give the Italians doles, for it might make them permanently dependent thereby destroying their character. Hard to believe as it might sound, in those days a penny might not be available. Rev. Parroni and the Italian Methodist Church charged no admission for movies.

If he was aware of the “pauperism” theory, there was no indication of it. He gave all he could and his generosity with either the Albanians or Italians, now included many Jews, Blacks and other nationalities filtering into the “Bush” who were benefiting, as well. It was in this fashion that Rev. Parroni won the respect of the whole community. He seldom attached any strings to his generosity. Only to the Albanians and a few Sicilians would he suggest, “Hope to see you in Church, Sunday”.

Valentine wrote that what made Rev. Parroni’s generosity so remarkable was that he seemingly had an unlim-

ited supply of benefactors outside the community. For example, Christmas time in the community found most children without gifts. Parroni contacted merchants all over the city, not for money, but for actual gifts. Purportedly, his persuasion was quite effective, especially when performed in person-to-person contacts. Hundreds of assorted games, toys and clothing would be delivered to the Church where the Deaconess, Miss Carrie Henderson, would individually wrap each present. Recalling his childhood days, one successful Italian businessman told Valentine in an interview, “What I remember best is that they weren’t (*the gifts*) anything cheap; usually it was a large and expensive gift like a glove, sweater or train set. I couldn’t wait for Christmas to come.” Rev. Parroni knew no religious boundaries. He tried to make sure every needy child in the whole community got a gift.

According to Valentine, the same humanitarian generosity was evident throughout the whole year. Contacting grocers, welfare agencies and wholesale food outlets, Parroni would collect huge sums of food and distribute them to the needy. In an interview with Valentine, one second generation Sicilian recalled...” I can still see him walking along pulling his hand cart full of food. He sometimes walked for miles to get the stuff, and he always would give you something-especially if he knew you were really hungry”. With admiration in his eyes and voice, he concluded...”Parroni was a true saint”.

He was also instrumental in securing many jobs for unemployed Italians. He seems to have been particularly

effective in breaking down hiring practices discriminatory against them. For example, the Madison Gisholt Machine Company, a large industrial complex on Madison’s near Eastside, practiced discrimination in hiring Italians. Hearing of this, Rev. Parroni went directly to the Company’s President and had the policy removed. At first, Gisholt would hire only one Italian a month, but gradually this policy was broken down and quite a few Italians obtained employment there, especially during the Depression days.

The Gisholt company building is still standing at the south-east side of the corner of E. Washington Ave. & Baldwin St., with a two-block long section of the complex now part of the Madison Metro office and bus garage.

Interviewing first and second-generation Italians when he wrote his thesis in the early 1960’s, John Valentine commented how he was struck by the unanimity of opinion regarding Rev. Parroni. In various ways, they all seem to put their finger on two characteristics of his personality. “He was a good man and he knew how to get things done”. Some said he was a “religious man”, yet he was an “operator”. Others claimed...”he was a truly fine man who know how the world went around.”

All of which, according to Valentine, pointed out that in his flexibility, he did not give up principle. Parroni knew how to accomplish things, even manipulating people and situations in order to achieve the desired end.

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Yet, he was a truly religious man; kind, charitable and humble, always putting his “people’s” needs above all else, including his own ambitions and desires.

During the Depression, the people’s needs took precedence over the Italian Methodist Church’s Christianization and Americanization programs. Parroni devoted most of his time toward fulfilling those human wants rather than giving primacy to the Church’s stated goals. Nevertheless, Americanization programs were intensified. English language and naturalization programs enjoyed heavy attendance and received his personal attention. In the 1930’s, these classes became crucial for the Italians because, without citizenship, they could not gain employment on state and federal work relief projects like those from the Works Progress Administration (WPS). Rev. Parroni claimed he spent “over fifty percent of his time” trying to make the Italians “good citizen Americans and helping them become Americanized”.

The Italian Methodist Church retained some of its past Americanization

programs, as well. Miss Carrie Adams continued her work with the girls and the church’s various musical organizations also continued quite vigorously. The many festivals in the neighborhood seemed to increase with Parroni’s arrival. So much so that, according to a September 10, 1923 Capital Times article, the Madison Police Department complained about the frequency of the Italian festivals when combined with those of nearby St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and school and Neighborhood House.

The function of these gatherings was quite practical in that they provided a vent for many pent-up emotions rendering entertainment benefits to one and all. For Parroni, an added reason was for their continuous fund raising. His church would prepare Italian dinners, streets would be cleaned and blocked off, tables set up, lanterns hung from poles and trees, bands played and children frolicked at the corner of S. Lake and Milton Streets. In such a fashion, according to Valentine, a festive “continental” flavor was captured. In time, these festivals soon became great favorites of many Madisonians and, conse-

(Above) Madison’s current Hoyt Park shelter and fireplaces were built by local Italian laborers under WPA during the mid-1930’s using sandstone blocks from a nearby quarry. According to legend, the workers so loved their creation, when money ran out for the project before its completion, the Italian men continued to work for free until it was completed. Each man received a letter of thanks from then City Park Commission President Lucien Schlimgen.

quently, Parroni’s Church realized some considerable profits. By the mid-1940’s, profits ran as high as \$1,000 with nearly a thousand people attending.

Madison’s current yearly weekend Festa Italia after Memorial Day is a remainder of those past festivals.

The festivals had the desired effect of bringing Americans into closer contact with the Italian community. Due to the crime and violence of the Prohibition era, many Madisonians refused to enter the “Bush”, sometimes fearing for their lives. Rev. Parroni tried to

eradicate this notion by making the community attractive and, if possible, according to American criteria. Although the festivals were distinctly Italian, they were well supervised, orderly and thoroughly enjoyable to those Americans who attended.

In the same vein, Parroni inaugurated a community beautification project. In the late 1930's, he initiated it by employing professional Sicilian gardeners in the building of a community garden around the Church. When the Church garden won a national prize for best improvement in church lawns, he urged the Church's neighbors to do the same with their lawns. Over sixty Italian families cooperated. The story received much attention in the local newspapers, probably improving the Italians' image. The project also had a practical function by keeping many unemployed people temporarily occupied while the Italian settlement began losing its shabby appearance.

If one were to single out a particular group with which Rev. Parroni had considerable success, it would have to be the second-generation Albanian boys who were in their adolescence during the Depression decade of the 1930's, many of whom would go off to war in the 1940's. He seemed to

understand their problems and worked quite closely with them. The Italian Methodist Church, according to Valentine, seemed to have enjoyed better results than Neighborhood House in its work with the community's young men, even though both institutions were only two blocks apart. Much of the answer could probably be found in the Albanian boys of the church enjoying Rev. Parroni's leadership during this time in their lives.

Neighborhood House had strong ties with the University with many student volunteers, especially those studying sociology. But student turnover each semester meant a long-lasting relationship between Neighborhood House 'teens and student-teachers was rare.

Valentine opined that Parroni recognized the problem. A second-generation immigrant found the adjustment process acute because he was divided by two cultures—the home and school. (*Most teenagers in the neighborhood were attending Madison High (later Madison Central) or, after 1930, Madison West*). The problem was further compounded by the Depression with many young people who had completed or were finishing high school could not find employment.

the following 1931 essay in Neighborhood House files. He says he knew the author's name but withheld it for "obvious reasons", likely that the then young adult would, by the mid-1960's when Valentine's thesis was written, the adult would still be alive and in his 50's. The essay was untitled, unpublished with no reference to a school class for which it might have been written:

"I am twenty-one years old of age and although born in Italy, 1910, I am American in all respects, having lived here (Madison, Wis) for 20 years. I observe and live American customs and ideals so far as they do not interfere too seriously with certain old customs and habits brought over from Italy, and adhered to very strictly by the old folks...Up to present date I have had a high school education and several years of a vocational school. My father died when I was seven years old and as I was the oldest in the family I may be considered fortunate in being able to acquire a high school education for father didn't leave any money when he died."

"Mother as well as I counted a great deal on my working when I finished school, but I finished it at the wrong time. I haven't had a steady job since I finished school and that was two years ago... A job to me is no longer a means of success and promotion. When young, the success stories that I read filled me with ambition. I was going to work hard and sooner or later rise to



Perroni and son in front of Church garden

An essay written by a young Italian boy living in the "Bush" in 1931 supported Parroni's analysis of the adjustment problem for a teenager or male in his early 20's by the time the 1930's rolled around.

Valentine noted in his 1965 thesis footnotes that he found

Continued next page

Things I Didn't Know

be somebody. But the older I grew the more my ideas changed. Diligent work and promotion were and are no longer linked together in my mind. Work and some friend with a "pull" in the background became linked together. A person no longer wins a position in his merits. He wins it on his relationship. If your uncle or third cousin or your mother knows someone or is working in some position maybe you will get a job. But if you're alone there is no danger of getting work....Many young men and women (for) whom I helped prepare lessons in high school because they could not do them are holding jobs today. But of course they had uncles and cousins, etc. throughout the city...."

"What kind of a world is it when a family of three, a mother, a seventeen year old daughter, and a twenty-one-year-old son, cannot earn a living? There must be something wrong somewhere... Work and society, however, have twisted around. Society seems more sophisticated and snobbish.... The fact that I am Italian and that the Italians are looked upon with disfavor because of a certain few, may have something to do with this"

"My health has changed little but my self-confidence has been struck a blow. I feel a great deal smaller and less energetic than when I was attending school. Everything I do brings up the question, 'What is the use?' In other words, I have developed an inferiority complex".

After reading this, I wonder how

many young Italian men of this age growing up in the "Bush" during this time had these same words on their mind but didn't put them on paper. Jim LeTourneau

Rev. Parroni's solutions to the problems which the above essay emphasized were: first; keep these youngsters busy and; second; give them greater exposure to the outside community and American culture.

Through the Church's Community Center, the young people had much to keep them busy—handicraft work, athletics, music and a library were the main activities. In exposing the boys to the outside community he had both routine and unique ideas. He encouraged their participation in athletics. Again, from unknown benefactors, he secured assorted equipment and made arrangements with other city churches to use their athletic facilities. With the Methodist Church serving as the team's sponsor, Parroni encouraged and literally pushed the younger men out into the Madison community.

The following story best illustrates this. One second generation Italian noted that, on Saturday mornings, he and his friends would go on a one mile walk to the First Congregational Church at the corner of Breese Terrace and University Ave. to play basketball in its gym. Though the walk took about twenty minutes, he never felt comfortable leaving his "Bush" community until he returned to it. Parroni was aware of this problem and took some steps to eradicate it. Making arrangements with downtown theater managers, he would periodically take a large group of boys to see a new



Methodist Church basketball team

movie. However, after getting them into the theater, he would leave them to fend for themselves in a strange culture. Eventually, this and similar experiences did much to lessen the physical distance between the American and Italian communities.

Another unique method of exposing the young boys to the outside community occurred when he would borrow a dump truck, load 15 to 20 boys on it and drive through Madison. Some of the boys saw Madison's Eastside for the first time in this manner. One said, "It was like going to New York". This was used to ease the pain of insecurity because the boys, growing to men, would later have to enter a larger community. Parroni's greatest success was with second generation Albanians, especially the boys. Although during the 1930's many people flocked to his church, it was this small group of Albanians, who grew up during the Depression, that remained loyal to him with many permanently adopting Methodism.

Parroni's example of charity and brotherhood influenced the makeup of the "Bush". As years progressed, a greater number of non-Italians entered

his church. Consequently, the Albanians had a close relationship-first with the Eastern European Orthodox Jews who had moved into the Chandler St.-So. Murry St. area and later, African-Americans who moved up to the "Bush" from Chicago.

According to Valentine, he found it ironic that of the four pastors of the Italian Methodist Church, Rev. Parroni was much less concerned with Americanization and Evangelization work than the other three before him. Yet, he was extremely successful in both endeavors. When he retired in 1960, the Church was free of mortgage and had assets totaling about \$80,000. When the 1960's Urban Renewal project began the demise of the "Bush", the Italian Methodist Church merged with the South Shore Methodist Church and became known as Calvary United Methodist Church at 633 West Badger Rd. By the mid-1960's, the Italian Methodist Church building, along with its next-door parsonage, were both torn down along with the rest of the Italian neighborhood it had served for over forty years. Calvary United continued until 1997 when the church dissolved due to low attendance. *The church building on Badger Road is still in use, being currently occupied by the Fountain of Life Covenant Church, a Pentecostal denomination.*

With his 1960 retirement, Rev. Parroni returned to Italy. He had hoped to erect a new church when the new "Triangle" community was built but the National Methodist Church felt that its mission work was completed and withdrew financial support. Several members of the Albanian community offered to support his

plans for a new church with their personal funds, but Parroni realized there was no longer a need for a new church if there was no neighborhood.

Many Sicilians and first-generation Albanians who had joined Parroni's Church had now returned to Catholicism. Others, who were disseminated throughout the City of Madison when the neighborhood was leveled joined other Protestant Churches. According to Valentine, it must have been a sad day for Reverend Parroni when he decided to abandon his new venture and allow the Italian Methodist Church to die in the merger. But, he realized there was no longer an Italian neighborhood or community to serve.

The Italian Methodist Church enjoyed reasonable success in its Americanization process, but was less successful with its Evangelization efforts. What it did enjoy, according to John Valentine, was due to the unique religious predisposition the Albanians brought with them from Sicily. Add to that the magnetic personality of Rev. Antonio Parroni. This combination is noteworthy, Valentine wrote, because the Italian Methodist Church of Madison, one of sixty Methodist Home Mission Churches in the US, was the only one considered to be successful.

EPILOGUE

At the end of his 221-page, 1965 thesis, John Arthur Valentine added his own assessments of the Italian neighborhood of Madison based on what he had researched, who he interviewed, what he read from newspapers or documents he found and his own observations. He likely witnessed the demolition of the houses, stores, churches, synagogues,

restaurants and bars he had walked past in the months of visits to the "Bush" gathering information. He, wherever he is, like the rest of us who actually lived in the neighborhood must have felt a sad nostalgia standing on any corner in the "Bush" watching bulldozers and shovels demolishing a history we experienced firsthand. Here's a summary of what his EPILOGUE contained.

Valentine wrote, the assimilation of any immigrant group into the mainstream of American life was a tremendously complex process. Madison's Neighborhood House and the Italian Methodist Church were important forces in the local Italian's assimilation. However, these institutions were not the only forces. Prohibition and the Depression were vital factors. During the bootlegging era, Italians virtually monopolized the production and sale of illegal alcoholic beverages in Madison, an activity which brought the Italians into closer contact with the outside community. Reportedly, the headlights of cars owned by outside Madison residents lit up the Italian district every Friday and Saturday night, creating greater outside contact while providing financial profit. Immigrants, unable to obtain "relief" employment (WPS) without naturalization papers, began attending citizenship and language classes resulting in more citizenships granted than at any other time. With the University of Wisconsin located a scant five blocks away, many second-generation Italians attended college during the Depression and later, after World War II under the G.I. Bill,

Continued next page

giving Madison the highest education ratio than any other Italian community in the State.

Another important force for assimilation was World War II. At its outbreak, fully forty percent of Italians were on relief. The War brought prosperity, and this "relief" figure shrunk to less than one percent. Young Italian men, drafted into the armed forces, served valiantly all over the world with six from the "Bush" being killed in action. But, the war created national unity, lessening discrimination against Italian-Americans. With a manpower shortage, Italian women achieved new status with better jobs in government and local business.

However, all these forces combined contributed to the disintegration of the local Italian colony. Second generation Italians, no longer willing to accept an isolated immigrant life, began disseminating throughout Madison and within five years after World War II, the "Bush" was no longer predominantly populated by Italians. The few who remained in the old colony were eventually forced out by the urban renewal project initiated in the next decade. Many older Italians, most of whom were original immigrants, were reluctant to leave. The City Administration, in keeping with its previous treatment of the immigrants, showed little respect for their preference and went ahead with the demolition project.

Although there was much grumbling among the Italians, they did not attempt, politically, to block the project even though this urban renewal program did destroy the last vestige of the Italian's isolation and eliminated them

as a political entity in local government. In Valentine's opinion, this action forced the Italians into business and education as a means of bettering their position. This endeavor was greatly influenced by the local Jewish community. Valentine wrote that in interviews with Italians, he was told they considered their community to be an Italian-Jewish neighborhood. Finding success in education and business, the Jews from the "Bush" left it earlier than the Italians. Motivated by this success, the Italians began to take notice and were motivated to follow suit.

The actual size of the Italian settlement also hastened its assimilation into the overall Madison community. Comparing third and fourth generation Italians in larger cities, Valentine opined that because these cities had larger Italian populations, they were marrying within their own ethnic group. This was not the case with Madison's Italians who, with a smaller ethnic group, were forced to seek partners from other nationalities by the time second or third generation Italians were old enough to marry. Due to this lack of Italian population numbers, exclusively Italian businesses were unable or not called upon to provide services the former exclusive Italian community required. This forced many exclusive Italian businesses to move outside the community for customers.

The greatest motive for Italian immigration was economic drive; making better money. If economic betterment encouraged bootlegging and work on relief projects, it also meant attending American schools, learning English and adopting American customs. Valentine continued, even though

Neighborhood House and the Italian Methodist Church could claim some success in the Americanization of the Italians, it was likely the immigrants own aggressive economic drive which drove many to success. Neighborhood House could claim credit for the Americanization adjustment for Italian girls and the Italian Methodist Church for Italo-Albanian boys. Both institutions are credited by Italians for their sincere humanitarianism; providing food when there was none, finding jobs for the unemployed and explanation of strange American customs to the fearful immigrants.

However, according to Valentine, both Neighborhood House and the Italian Methodist Church are not above criticism. Neighborhood House demonstrated little appreciation for Southern Italian culture. Both often conveyed a paternalistic attitude and sense of superiority. This made the outside community adopt these attitudes and looked upon the Italians as less than equal. Local newspapers also conveyed this attitude. Until World War II, they printed only two types of stories about Italians, usually adverse to the local immigrant's image. Periodically, they published articles which were paternalistic in tone, submitted to the paper by Neighborhood House or the Methodist Church. The only articles the newspapers researched themselves were sensationalistic. They read that the Italians had a proclivity for crime, clannishness and uncleanness. As a result, many Madison readers either held the Italians in suspect or looked upon them as incompetent. John Arthur Valentine

Continued next page

However, both these institutions, Neighborhood House and Italian Methodist Church were the social spots just about every kid who grew up in the "Bush" looked forward to going to each week. For over forty years in the neighborhood, they, and Brittingham park, were the social hub for the young. For those who participated in their numerous activities, trips or dances, they were

the developers of the social habits of Italian youth.

"Don't let it be forgot...That once there was a spot...For one brief shining moment that was known as ... Camelot."

For those who grew up in the "Bush", the comparative words based on T.H. White's novel, "The Once and Future King", Madison's Italian neighbor-

hood was their "spot", now only a memory, "not to be forgot", recollected by black and white photos displayed at Festa Italia each year. For Italians, Jews and African-Americans of years past, the "Bush" was their "Camelot", a place of comfort. It was a half-century "shining moment", for a now aging population, including this writer. "Camelot" was imagined as a place of royalty and wealth. The "Bush" was quite the opposite. But, as one Italian once said, "If you lived in the Bush, you didn't know you were poor until someone from the outside said you were."

The Madison Italian community was a subject of thesis interest by Wisconsin students beginning in 1917 with Henry Barnbrock's 72-page thesis investigation. It opened the eyes of many in Madison, led to the creation of Neighborhood House which worked to improve the living conditions of the Italians and spawned other student theses, including that of John Arthur Valentine's 1965 composition, which over the past year, we have summarized. Probably because of its proximity to the University, its uniqueness as an ethnic community drew students to want to write about it. They left their research for us to read, to learn from and for me, even though I am a product of the "Bush", it opened my eyes to my neighborhood and...things I didn't know.

Prof. Jim LeTourneau, IWC. ■

IWC Birthdays

July

Scott Rossi	(2)
Paul Giansante	(5)
Robert J. Schiro	(8)
Mike Cerro	(9)
Henry Cuccia	(9)
Butch Pullara	(10)
Joseph Cabibbo	(14)
Anthony Bonanno	(16)
Daniel Dyer	(16)
John Scalissi	(17)
Philip Caravello	(20)
John Pascarella	(20)
Michael Stassi	(22)
David Zanesco	(22)
Bill Czajkowski	(26)
Steve Loniello	(27)
Dominic DiMarco	(28)
Adam Benedetto	(29)
Joseph Lombardino	(30)

August

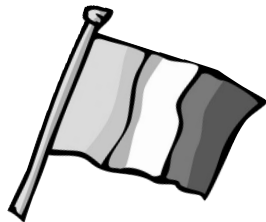
Alfred Falaschi	(5)
Vince Fumusa	(5)
Robert Battaglia	(7)
Phillip S. Clementi	(9)
Michael Heald	(9)
Tim Gatti	(12)
Richard Alexander	(22)
Charles Belz	(23)
Michael Kronz	(24)
Eugene Urso	(27)

IAWC Birthdays

Charmaine Pellitteri, 7/3
 Coco Bustamante, 7/30
 Katie Porwoll, 8/7
 Karen Myers, 8/12P



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Meeting Dates

- IWC Council Meetings — 2nd Tuesday of Each Month 7:00 pm
- IWC Membership Meetings — 3rd Tuesday of Each Month 6:30 pm

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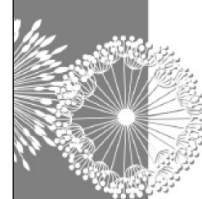
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