



# THE NEW JERSEY ITALIAN and ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION



## INTERIM REPORT on the 2002-2004 *Programs and Activities of the Commission*

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## **Introduction**

The historical process of the unification of the Italian state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to modern Italy between 1859 and 1870. This movement was an expression of new-found nationalism on behalf of a people that dated back to the earliest civilizations in Europe. This movement, known as the *Risorgimento*, was a celebration of cultural identity and pride.

There is a similar movement in New Jersey in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The surge in the renewal of Italian and Italian American identity and pride was galvanized in part by negative media images of Italian Americans in the state of NJ. This movement, supported by the Government of Italy, is a search for ancestry and roots among generations that look back to the values and struggles of their forbearers. Italian Americans in NJ also are seeking ways to preserve the heritage for the younger generations. The approximately 2 million descendants of Italian immigrants in NJ are searching for their cultural connections, their history and the language of their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

NJ has one of the largest populations of Italian Americans in the United States. Their numbers represent approximately a quarter of NJ's citizens, making them the largest ethnic group in the State. The Italians of NJ rank as the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest population after New York.

More than 400 Italian American organizations, institutions and entities in NJ are fostering the growing promotion of the Italian and Italian American Heritage. Over 150 schools have Italian language teachers and more than 33,000 students from kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade are studying Italian. The study of the Italian language is the fastest growing foreign language program at the university level in NJ.

Professional Italian Americans today have a very different employment and income level than their forbearers. 67% of Italian Americans nationwide are white-collar workers and the Italians of NJ now serve as corporate officers, elected officials and educators. They are the lawyers, doctors, researchers, entrepreneurs, administrators, teachers, police, rescue, military personnel, artists, craftsmen, restaurateurs and entertainers. Financial surveys estimate that over 20,000 Italian Americans in NJ have over \$2 million in net worth.

Business and trade between Italy and NJ is flourishing. In 2003, Italy was NJ's 11<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner, exporting over \$470 million in goods and services. The United States imports over \$25 billion annually from Italy, much of it entering the shipping ports and airports of NJ, making Italy one of America's top-ten importing partners.

As a result of the *Risorgimento* in this State, the Government of NJ responded by enacting legislation to create the NJ Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission – the 1<sup>st</sup> Commission of its kind and scope in the United States. This Commission is a state agency that serves the Italian and Italian American community in NJ, promoting the Italian Heritage and positive images of Italian Americans.

The eyes of Italy and other states are on NJ. Since the Commission's inception, the Italian government helped form a similar agency in Delaware and is developing agencies in Pennsylvania, Maryland and other nearby states. California's Task Force on Italian Heritage and the Washington D.C. community look to NJ's Commission as an example of what can be done for the Italian and Italian American communities.

The Commission, overwhelmingly staffed by prominent Italian and Italian American volunteers, has made enormous strides since its birth in 2002. Developing and implementing over fourteen different statewide programs and products since its inception, the Commission is on its way to a tremendous start. Working with the NJ community, the Commission is planning to achieve even greater milestones in the coming years.

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# I. Overview of the Commission

## *Purpose*

The Commission, which was established by P.L. 2001 Chapter 343 C.18A 4-42 in January 2002, raises public awareness of the rich and varied culture, positive achievements and traditions of Italy, the Italian people, and the Italian Americans of New Jersey.

The Commission carries out its responsibilities through public and privately sponsored resources and programs. These activities are designed to enhance and develop greater understanding and appreciation for the contributions and experiences of Italians and Italian Americans among the youth and adult communities of New Jersey. By raising levels of awareness, the intention of the Commission is to spread the message of understanding, respect and appreciation of Italian heritage and culture throughout New Jersey, and beyond.

The approximately two million descendants of Italian immigrants in New Jersey form a vast untapped reservoir for the development of leadership talent. Sharing a common purpose, they are the essential driving force to develop and sustain the work and goals of the Commission. Knowledge of the unique past and present global contributions and accomplishments of the inhabitants of the Italian peninsula both before and after its unification between 1861-1871, form a necessary foundation for a complete understanding of the contributions and accomplishments of Italian Americans to New Jersey and to the entire United States.

The Commission engages in the development, support and production of educational programs, forums, seminars, publications and exchanges for schools, universities, the community, the private sector and the public sector throughout the state. The Commission brings long overdue recognition to Italian accomplishments that have improved the quality of life for all, be it the sciences, jurisprudence, the fine and performing arts, technology, medicine, literature, philosophy, trade or commerce.

This largest immigrant group to New Jersey at the turn of the nineteenth century represents and symbolizes as a model for others, how America, as the world's oldest flourishing democracy, was built on the love, sweat and tears of its immigrant ethnic peoples.

## *Mission and Guiding Principles*

*“To build and strengthen the cultural identity of Italians and Italian Americans through public educational programs that preserve and promote an accurate, bias free and non stereotyped understanding and awareness of historical and current contributions and accomplishments of people of Italian heritage.”*

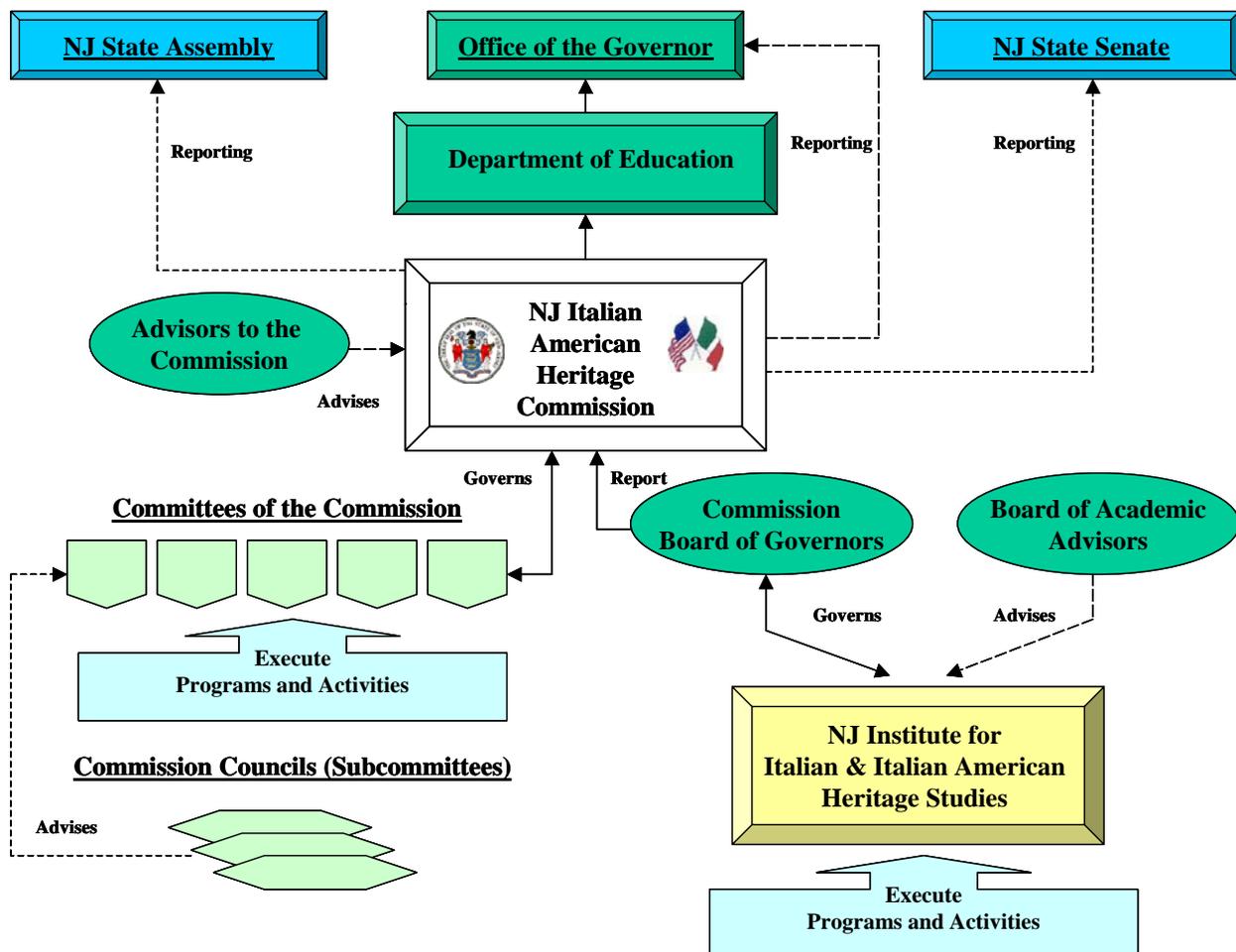
The Commission believes that the work to be done to eliminate bigotry and loss of cultural identity can only be achieved through non-partisan efforts. The Commission also believes that the future attitudes and beliefs of the people of New Jersey are most influenced through the education of its youth today. Since the United States and New Jersey were influenced and developed by the contributions of numerous immigrant groups, the Commission holds that respect for all ethnic groups must be a cornerstone of our values as a nation and as a state.

## II. Organization

### *Structure of the Commission*

The Commission is comprised of twenty-one members, two of which are represented by the standing Commissioner of Education and the standing Chairman of the Presidents Council on Higher Education. The remaining nineteen are appointed to three-year terms, of which nine are appointed by the Governor, five by the President of the Senate, and five by the Speaker of the Assembly. Currently, there are twelve Committees and Boards and three Subcommittees serving the Commission, with a total of over 100 individual volunteers. The professional staff consists of three directors, supported by several student interns.

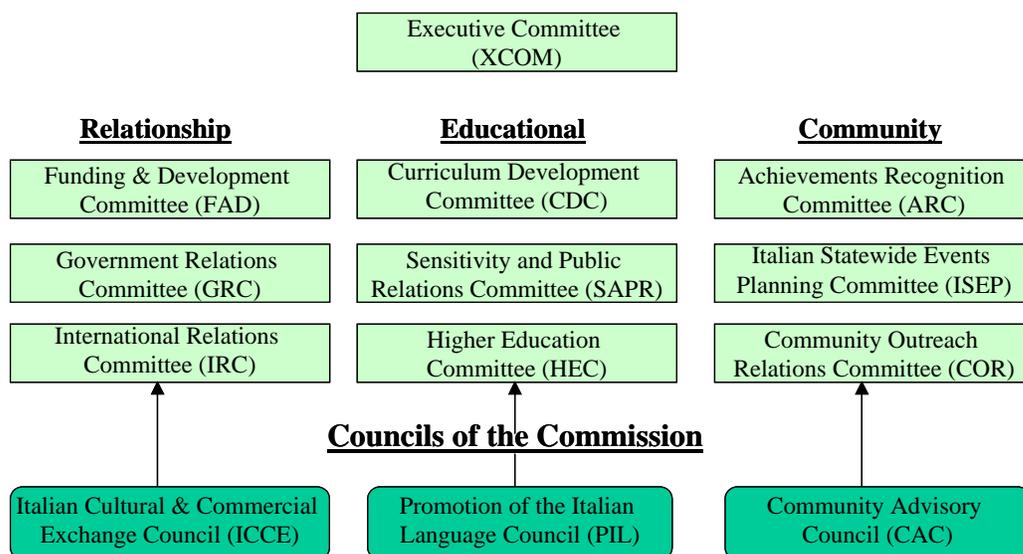
### Organizational Diagram



### *Committees of the Commission*

The Commission has created a number of standing Committees, which may change from time to time. The Commission also has created advisory Subcommittees, which are called Councils. Other bodies involved with the Commission include affiliated non-profits, such as the Institute, advisory groups and task forces, which are committed to specific long-range projects.

**Committees of the Commission**



***Key Committees and Functions***

<b>Community Outreach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with 290 Italian American Organizations</i></b></li> <li>• Hosted 3 statewide leadership convocations</li> <li>• Hosted statewide leadership Congress with over 500 attendees</li> <li>• Developing community-driven youth programs for 2005</li> <li>• Coordinates with other ethnic community groups</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with Department of Education</i></b></li> <li>• Developing Curriculum for Italian Heritage for 2004</li> <li>• Drafting of over 50 Lesson Plans and Study Aids</li> <li>• Launched Pilot Program for over 5,000 students in NJ</li> </ul>
<b>Government Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with New Jersey and Italian Government</i></b></li> <li>• Garners advice, support and participation for programs</li> <li>• Develops NJ-Italy collaborative commercial &amp; cultural ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Higher Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with Universities and Italian Language Teachers</i></b></li> <li>• Supports 33,000 students studying Italian in New Jersey</li> <li>• Sponsored 4 teacher and student conferences in 2004</li> <li>• Developing Italian Heritage multimedia educational tools</li> </ul>
<b>International Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with NJ and Italian private sectors</i></b></li> <li>• Educates NJ and Italian communities about opportunities</li> <li>• Developing trade mission and business conference projects</li> </ul>
<b>Italian Statewide Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with Italian Government and Italian American groups</i></b></li> <li>• Sponsored 3 major celebrations at the Governor's Mansion</li> <li>• Collaborated on multiple regional events and festivals</li> </ul>
<b>Sensitivity and Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Works with NJ civic groups</i></b></li> <li>• Raises awareness of negative stereotyping and discrimination</li> <li>• Cultivates respect for contributions of all ethnic groups</li> </ul>

### III. Achievements

With the purpose of promoting Italian Heritage by educating the citizens of New Jersey about the positive contribution of Italians and Italian Americans, the Commission has made enormous progress in achieving the goals established in its enabling legislation. Working with the NJ Italian and Italian American communities, the Commission achieved major milestones and developed over twenty projects during the past two years, since its establishment in 2002.

- **Launching the Commission** – Holding over 200 organizational meetings, gathering over 100 individual volunteers to serve on seventeen different committees, establishing the Institute for Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies at Rutgers University and retaining professionals
- **NJ School Curriculum Project** -- Launching of the “Universality of Italian Heritage” Curriculum Project, a battery of lesson plans and teaching aids designed to educate all NJ students about the contributions of the Italian civilization and the Italian American culture
- **Community Outreach** – Hosting 4 major statewide conferences dedicated to unifying the efforts of the Italian American community in New Jersey, culminating in the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations with over 500 persons in attendance
- **Casa Italiana** - Collaboration on the design and development of “Casa Italiana”, a 10,000 square foot facility statewide cultural center to be located at Rutgers University
- **Documentary Film** -- Development and filming of NJN’s new documentary on the “Italians of New Jersey”, focusing on the achievements of over 50 prominent Italian Americans in NJ
- **Statewide Italian Community Celebrations** – Organizing Italian celebrations for over 1,000 attendees for Italian Liberation Day and Columbus Day at the Governor’s Mansion
- **University Conference Sponsorships** - Supporting and funding the “Age of Galileo” academic symposium at Rutgers University and the “Discrimination and Defamation in the History of Italian Americans” community conference at Seton Hall University
- **Teaching the Italian Language Programs** - Organizing, funding and supporting educational conferences designed for Italian language teachers for over 200 participants
- **Institute Publications** - Supporting authors and providing funding for the publication of 5 books and academic journals about Italian and Italian American topics
- **Community Websites** - Deploying 2 community website with information on statewide community events and a master calendar for the over 400 Italian American organizations in NJ
- **Italian Hours Events** - Funding of 20 Italian cultural programs known as “Italian Hours” at Rutgers University, including music, history, art and film, for the NJ community
- **Promoting Italian Heritage for Students** - Supporting an educational conference for over 100 students and funding 4 study abroad scholarships for students of the Italian language
- **Italian Heritage Educational CD** – Development of a CD containing multimedia presentations on the Italian culture, language and heritage for distribution to the community
- **Research Projects** – Including NJ demographics analysis showing the communities and districts in which Italian Americans live and studying opportunities for business and trade

The successes of these projects inspired the Commission to plan for more programs in the coming years. Based on recommendations from the Italian and Italian American community, the Government of Italy, the Government of New Jersey and the private sector, the Commission is looking forward to developing projects for major cultural, commercial and educational exchanges and to continue its work of promoting the positive contributions of the Italian Heritage for the citizens of New Jersey.

## IV. Programs

### *Programs of the Commission 2002-2004*

During the fiscal years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, the Commission developed and sponsored a wide range of programs for the citizens of New Jersey. Since the legislated mission of the Commission is to create educational programs related to the promotion of the Italian and Italian American Heritage, the Commission's focus during the first two years was to implement programs in collaboration with other organizations, as well as on its own. The following pages identify the active, recurring program activities of the Commission.

#### 1. [NJ SCHOOL CURRICULUM PROJECT: "The Universality of Italian Heritage"](#)

As mandated by the enabling legislation, the Commission's Curriculum Development Committee developed an innovative curriculum for the 618 New Jersey school districts, known as the "Universality of Italian Heritage". Under development since 2002, the curriculum was developed as an infusion model that emphasizes the contributions of the Italian civilization and culture to many subject areas, including civics and government, science and technology, art and architecture, trade and exploration and literature. The first phase of this project is designed for 6-12 grade levels, which can be infused into social studies, art, science, language arts and world languages classes. The curriculum was designed "by teachers, for teachers", complies with all NJDOE core content standards and provides a non-intrusive, up-to-date and innovative means of highlighting the significance of the Italian heritage.

#### Representative Lesson Plan Topics

Roman Influences on U.S. Government  
From the Colosseum to the Meadowlands  
Da Vinci and Stream-of-Consciousness  
Galileo's Investigation of Gravity  
Columbus and the Oriental Spice Trade  
Mazzei's Influence on Jefferson  
Renaissance and Three Dimensional Art  
Mirandola and the Concept of Progress  
Darwimsim and Anti-Italian Sentiment  
Immigration to New Jersey  
WWII Italian American Detention Camps

The curriculum consists of a series of lesson plans, designed in NJDOE format, with objectives, background, procedures and student assessments. Supplementary reading material is provided for most lessons, as are bibliographies and web references. Additional lesson plans cover Italian immigration to New Jersey and address issues of stereotyping and discrimination. Study aids covering prominent Italian and Italian American achievers, supplementary materials and Italian factoids are under development.

**The first phase of this Pilot Program is being introduced into approximately 10 school districts during the 2004-2005 school year.** The expectation is to field test this project with 5,000-7,000 students, after teacher training is conducted in each Pilot School District by the Commission. Following observations, teacher evaluation, educational organization reviews and revisions, the curriculum is targeted for general release by the end of 2005. Phase II for K-5 lesson plans will be developed during 2005 and field-tested during the 2005-2006 scholastic year to a larger number of school districts.

## 2. NJ CONGRESS OF ITALIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS

As mandated by the existing legislation, the Commission's Community Outreach Relations Committee has been reaching out to the Italian American community in an attempt to coordinate the efforts of the more than 400 Italian American organizations in the state. **The objective was to establish the Commission as a clearinghouse of information for the Italian American community and to serve the interests of the community organizations through an association model.** Beginning in 2003, the Community Outreach Relations Committee began identifying leaders and members of New Jersey's Italian American community and polled them to ascertain project priorities and existing efforts in the educational fields. By February 2004, as mandated by the legislation, the Commission had formed the Community Advisory Council, a subcommittee of approximately 20 Commission-appointed Italian American and Italian leaders that serve to advise the Commission.

### Sessions of 1<sup>st</sup> Italian American Congress

Governors' Addresses to Organizations  
Italian Government Remarks to Community  
Unifying Efforts of Organizations  
Creation of Political Delegation  
Promoting Business and Trade with Italy  
Combating Stereotyping  
Italian Youth Leadership Summer School  
Promotion of Italian Language  
Preserving Italian Culture in New Jersey  
Launching the Italian Curriculum Project  
Organizing Youth Programs and Mentoring  
Adoption of Resolutions

Following the result of a major survey of community leaders and educators, released in May 2004, the Commission began organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations. **This Congress served as the first statewide convention for New Jersey's Italian American Organizations and was held on October 23, 2004 at Rutgers University. Over 500 community leaders were in attendance from North, South and Central Jersey.** Participants included: former Governors DiFrancesco and Florio; Italian Consuls General Bandini (New York), Mott (Philadelphia) and Toschi (Newark); the national presidents of the Order of the Sons of Italy in America and UNICO; representatives from Washington D.C.'s National Italian American Foundation; Assemblymen DiGaetano, Chivukula, and Greenstein; other elected officials and leaders from many Italian American organizations.

The Congress provided a networking opportunity for the Italian American community and consisted of various panel discussions, working group sessions and planning meetings. Three Resolutions were adopted unanimously, which included plans for next year's Congress, the adoption of the principle of unity and coordination among organizations and the formation of a bipartisan Italian American Political Delegation in Trenton.

The Congress also included an exhibition hall with tables for Italian American organizations, Italian American businesses and Italian educational centers. Musical interludes included performances by the Bloomfield Mandolin Orchestra and an Italian-English rock opera performance by Mr. Alex Kariotis from the musical "Holding On". Opening honor guard flag ceremonies were conducted by the Association of Italian Carabinieri and the Passaic County Sheriff's Department.

### **3. ITALIAN STATEWIDE COMMUNITY EVENTS**

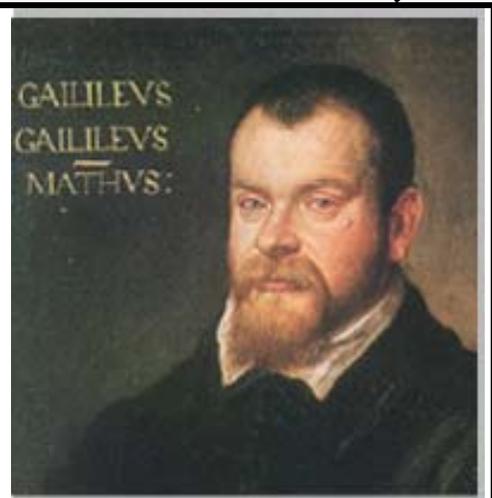
As mandated by the enabling legislation, the Commission created the Italian Statewide Events Planning Committee to effect the “coordination of events that will provide appropriate awareness and memorialization of the culture.” Since 2003, the Commission has collaborated, organized and sponsored three major statewide Italian commemorations of Italian Liberation Day (April 25<sup>th</sup>) and Columbus Day. Each event was held at the Governor’s Mansion, with the largest drawing over one thousand people in attendance. These events were hosted by Governor McGreevey and were marked by the participation of New Jersey elected government officials, representatives of the Italian Government and New Jersey’s two Italian American former governors. These events were the result of collaborative efforts by the Commission and a variety of New Jersey Italian American organizations.

These celebrations of Italian and Italian American bonds of friendship included ceremonial remarks by elected officials and addresses by the Italian government representatives. Notable Italian American celebrities, such as Yogi Berra and Joe Piscopo, provided entertaining anecdotes about the Italian American experience. The festivities included musical performances of traditional Italian folk songs and selected operatic performances. In addition, Renaissance-costumed, banner troops from Italy demonstrated their performance skills.



### **4. UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIPS**

Through the Commission’s Institute for Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies, based at Rutgers University, the Commission supports New Jersey universities that promote the Italian language, heritage and culture. In 2004, the Commission helped to organize and coordinate external funding to support two major conferences on Italian and Italian American topics, which were held at two of New Jersey’s leading universities that sponsor Italian Studies.



**Age of Galileo Symposium**

The first conference, the “Age of Galileo Symposium”, held during the week of October 25-October 31, 2004 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, brought together leading scholars in the fields of art history, comparative literature, and the history and philosophy of science to explore the wide-ranging influence of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) on both the arts and science of his day. Other related events included on a lecture by Dava Sobel, author of *Galileo's Daughter*; a screening of Joseph Losey's acclaimed 1975 film "Bertolt Brecht's Galileo"; an exhibition of rare, illustrated scientific texts from the seventeenth century from Rutgers Special Collections; and a concert, "Opera in the Time of Galileo," performed at the Mason Gross School of Performing Arts.

The second conference, “Real Stories: Discrimination and Defamation in the History of Italian Americans”, took place on Saturday, December 4, 2004, at Seton Hall University. This daylong conference focused on discrimination and defamation in the history of Italian Americans. This was the first major academic conference, organized on a national scale, to be devoted specifically to the theme of discrimination against Italian Americans. There were panel discussions involving prominent historians, politicians, entertainers, media critics, and representatives of the major Italian American organizations that respond to discrimination and defamation. The program included a historical documentary screening and book exhibits.

## 5. ITALIAN HOURS AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Through the Commission’s Institute for Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies, based at Rutgers University, the Commission works closely with Rutgers University’s Department of Italian and the Italian Studies Committee.

Formed in 2002, the Italian Studies Committee offers undergraduate students the opportunity to study the Italian civilization through an interdisciplinary major. As part of that program, the Committee worked with the Commission to organize and fund a series of programs open to the public, that highlight the breadth of the Italian Heritage. Known as “Italian Hours”, these offerings include lectures on history and art, exhibitions of books and artwork, film screenings and musical performances.



The image is a slide titled "Italian Hours Programs" with a blue background. It features the seal of the New Jersey State Library on the left and a small graphic of the American and Italian flags on the right. The main content is a bulleted list of programs from 2003 to 2004. At the bottom, it says "2003-2004 Schedule of Italian Hours Programs" and has a small number "2" in the bottom right corner.

- Sponsored with Rutgers University Italian Studies Committee
  - 04/04/03: Musical Treats from Italy
  - 04/04/03: Renaissance Rivals: Titian vs. Michelangelo
  - 04/04/03: Conversazioni Exhibition
  - 04/09/03: Italian Cooking with “Molto Mario” Batali
  - 04/10/03: Language & Italian Americans Lecture
  - 04/26/03: Film Screenings – “I Remember” & “La Notte”
  - 10/17/03: Baroque Minimalism Sculpture Exhibitions
  - 10/17/03: “Tempting Sin, Attempting Virtue” – Rutgers Conference
  - 11/24/03: Madrigalists at Prayer: 16<sup>th</sup> Century Music
  - 12/13/03: Book Signing -- Italian American Writers in NJ
  - 03/24/04: “Italians in NJ” History Lecture
  - 04/22/04: Presentation by Louise DeSalvo “Crazy in the Kitchen”
  - 04/23/04: Italian Arias and Songs

2003-2004 Schedule of Italian Hours Programs

## 6. COMMISSION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



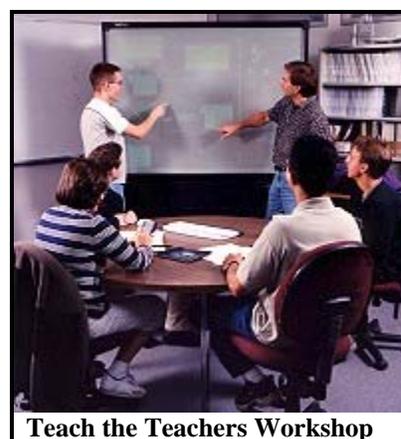
Through the Commission’s Institute for Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies, based at Rutgers University, the Commission offers internship opportunities to university students interested in Italian and Italian American subjects. Students are selected on a competitive basis and work on projects for the Commission, which includes organization, research and specific projects. Since 2003, a total of five students internships have been offered, some paid and some non-paid. Beginning in 2005, the Institute will be coordinating with Rutgers University to provide credits for qualified students.

## **7. TEACHING THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

The Commission supports the study of the Italian language and Italian culture through its Higher Education Committee. This Committee, which works with university and school instructors, develops programs to assist in the training of instructors with the most up-to-date methodologies and materials. In 2004, the Higher Education Committee organized two major events and formed a community Subcommittee dedicated to assisting the promotion of the Italian language in New Jersey.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the Committee organized a panel focusing on promising new trajectories in the instruction of Italian language and culture in the state of New Jersey. Named, “*From the Community to the Classroom, Promoting the Study of World Languages: The Case of Italian in New Jersey*,” this panel was featured at the 3-day Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in New York. The panel discussed new initiatives in the Tri-State area, new methodologies and new efforts to increase the learning of Italian in the school systems of NJ.

On June 4<sup>th</sup> and June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at Montclair State University, teachers of all levels and disciplines engaged discussions about the growing field of Italian American Studies and the state of Italian language instruction in the state of New Jersey. Entitled “Teach the Teachers Days”, over 100 teachers attended these collaborative instructional workshops for NJ teachers of the Italian language and culture. This program, co-sponsored by the Coccia Institute and the National Italian American Foundation, consisted of a series of daylong workshops highlighting new materials and methods for teaching the Italian language and the Italian culture in schools.



Capitalizing on the interest of the Italian Government in promoting Italian language teacher exchanges and developing an Advanced Placement Italian program in New Jersey, the Higher Education Committee formed the Promotion of the Italian Language Council in August 2004. Drawing educators from the New Jersey community, the mission of this Subcommittee is to assess the supply of teachers and the demand for the Italian language programs in the school systems of New Jersey.

## **8. ITALIAN HERITAGE STUDENT SPONSORSHIPS**

The Commission’s Higher Education Committee seeks to foster and encourage youth interest in the Italian Heritage by supporting educational programs that appeal to students. In 2004, the Higher Education Committee collaborated with a number of initiatives designed to support student exploration of the Italian language and culture.

In March 2004, the Commission supported and sponsored “Italian Heritage Day”, a student conference organized in North Jersey by the Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey. During this conference, students of the Italian language from various school districts convened to participate in a series of student workshops and performing arts venues.



Siena Scholarships

During the summer of 2004, Montclair State University continued its Italian summer school program for young students known as the Scuola Fantasia. The Commission supported the continuing development of this interactive learning program.

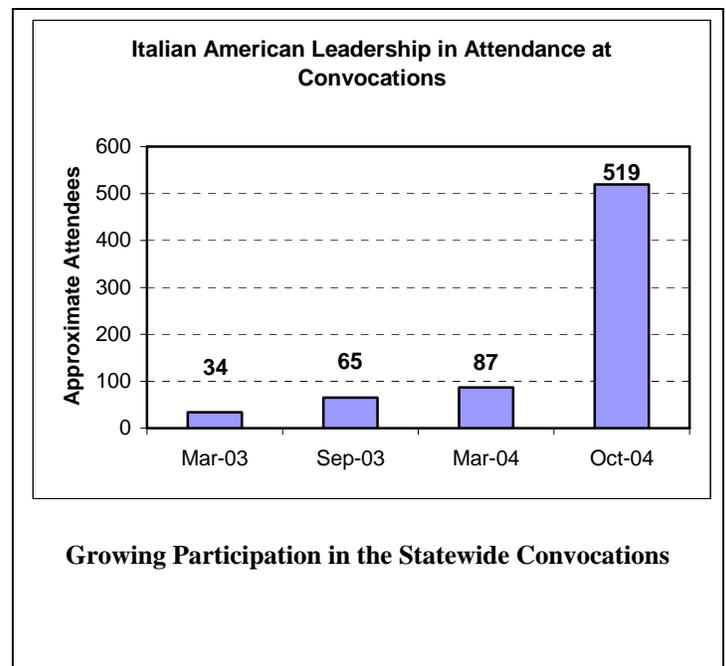
The successful March student conference culminated in an essay contest regarding the Italian culture, which was won by four high school students of the Italian language. The Commission assisted the Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey by securing external funding to enable these four students to attend a summer session in Siena, Italy at the Università dei Stranieri. The students were required to develop observations about contemporary Italian society and prepare reports for the Commission from a young Italian American's perspective.

## 9. ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CONVOCATIONS

Beginning in 2003, the Community Advisory Council of the Commission organized a series of bi-annual Italian American leadership convocations, with the intent of assessing the issues on which the Italian American community was focused.

These leadership convocations included presentations by Governor McGreevey, Commissioners and active individuals in the community. Focus group workshops were held to survey topics such as the need for coordination among the 400 Italian American organizations in New Jersey, the growing demand for Italian language instruction and the need to combat negative Italian American stereotypes in the media.

As the Commission began reaching out to greater segments of the Italian American population in New Jersey, the attendance at these convocations increased steadily. The output from the convocations pointed to the need for an organizing convention in 2004, which was achieved by the 500-person Congress in October 2004.



## 10. ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY OUTREACH ROADSHOWS

In order to serve the needs of the Italian American organizations in New Jersey, the Commission embarked on a program of participation in various statewide Italian American community events and meetings, beginning in 2003. Commissioners make themselves available to attend various community festivals and planning meetings, in order to increase the visibility of the Commission's work. The goal of these roadshows is to develop an interactive dialogue with a wider array of local organizations, in order to assist on-going efforts to promote Italian and Italian American heritage.

## V. Products

### *Products of the Commission 2002-2004*

During the fiscal years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, the Commission developed a series of products designed to heighten community awareness of the Italian and Italian American Heritage and to assist in the coordination of the Italian American community. In addition, the Commission, with the assistance of its Board of Academic Advisors and its educational committees, provided or secured subventions for the publications of works that promoted a positive image of Italians and Italian Americans.

#### 1. NJ ITALIAN AMERICAN DEMOGRAPHICS ANALYSIS



Using New Jersey's census data from 2000 and other ethnic distribution data for the state of New Jersey, the Commission embarked on a study to identify the areas in which the Italians of New Jersey inhabited. Preliminary estimates indicate that approximately 2 million New Jersey citizens claim Italian descent, which represents approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total population. With these numbers, Italian Americans represent the largest ethnic group in the state.

The Commission is in the process of identifying the counties and cities that have the larger populations of Italian Americans, as well as the concentration within the top 260 cities of New Jersey. The current state of this preliminary analysis was displayed at the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of Italian American Organizations on October 23, 2004.

This initial analysis is part of a longer-term study that will eventually trace the historical patterns of immigration to New Jersey and identify cultural and historical centers of interest for the Italian American community. The objective is to increase awareness of the extent and geographical location of the Italian American community throughout the state.

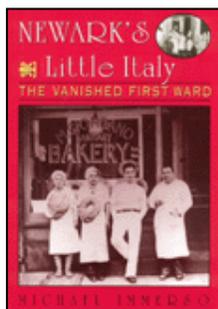
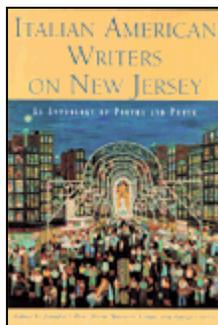
#### 2. NJ ITALIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATION DIRECTORY

In accordance with the mandates of the enabling legislation, the Commission initiated the collection of information regarding the activities, functions and locations of Italian and Italian American institutions and organizations in New Jersey. These entities include the various Italian American organizations, as well as cultural centers, educational institutions and other resource centers that house information on Italian and Italian American culture and history.

The first product released to the public in October 2004 was a preliminary draft directory of the 290 Italian American organizations in New Jersey that have been identified by the Commission. Future releases will include more detailed program information and will expand coverage to the universities, schools and communities.

### 3. INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

The Commission supports authors and the publication of works that promote a positive image of Italians and Italian American and works that educate the citizens of New Jersey about the Italian Heritage. Between 2003 and 2004, the Commission has identified, reviewed, approved and sponsored the publication of five works related to Italian and Italian American history and literature. Two of these works covered the history of Italian Americans in New Jersey. Another two were collections of Italian and Italian American contemporary prose and poetry. The fifth work was an academic journal on the proceedings of a conference on Italian literature.



## Publications



- The Italians of New Jersey
  - Dennis J. Starr
  - Republished 2002
- La Fusta: Conference Journal on Tempting Sin, Attempting Virtue
  - Italian Graduate Society of Rutgers University
  - Published 2003 with Rutgers University Press
- Italian American Writers on New Jersey
  - Gillan, Gillan & Giunta
  - Published 2003 with Rutgers University Press
- Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward
  - Michael Immerso
  - Republished 2004 with Rutgers University Press
- Binding the Lands: Italian and Italian American Poetry
  - Dr. Alessandro Vettori (Rutgers University Professor)
  - Published 2004

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### 4. ITALIAN HERITAGE MULTIMEDIA CD



Italian Heritage Multimedia

In order to affect its objective to promote the education of the Italian civilization, culture and language, the Commission sponsored the development of an interactive, multimedia-teaching tool in 2003. This CD on Italian Heritage combines visuals, text, music and graphics that highlight Italian and Italian American achievers, connections between the English and Italian languages and showcase Italian music and art. The CD also covers Italian and Italian American history. This tool is intended to be distributed in conjunction with the Curriculum Project to NJ school districts, as well as to local chapters of Italian American organizations in NJ.

## 5. [COMMUNITY WEBSITE](#)

Using the Internet as a means of disseminating information, the Commission developed a website in conjunction with the Department of Education that serves the New Jersey community. Information related to the purpose, functions and programs of the Commission are displayed, as well as meeting and events schedules. In an effort to become an information nexus for the Italian American community, the website also has a detailed series of news abstracts, a master calendar of statewide events and descriptive links to other Italian and Italian American institutions, organizations and entities.

new jersey department of educationnjdoe home



**The New Jersey Italian American Heritage Commission**



*Honoring the Heritage, Promoting the Culture*

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[Organization](#) | [Committees](#) | [Meeting Schedule](#) | [Events](#) | [Links](#)  
[Important News](#) | [Getting Involved](#) | [Program Descriptions](#) | [Contact Us](#)

**Important News/Press Releases**  
**For the Calendar Year 2004**  
*(Please click on a link to access specific information)*

- 1. [General Press Releases, Advisories and Announcements](#)**  
This section provides a record of the release of recent information distributed to the media, which are approved by the Sensitivity Awareness and Public Relations Committee of the Commission.
- 2. [Commission News](#)**  
This section provides an abstract of the monthly Commission meetings and summarizes news related to the Commission as a whole. The Commission is a state agency located in, but not of, the NJ Department of Education. The Commission also collaborates with the Office of the Governor.
- 3. [Committee News](#)**  
This section provides abstracts of meetings, activities, events and programs related to the Commission's Committees, Boards, Councils and Task Forces.
- 4. [NJ Italian American Heritage Institute News](#)**  
This section provides abstracts of news related to the Institute's activities, programs and events. The Institute is a not-for-profit organization established by the Commission at Rutgers University for the promotion of Italian and Italian American Heritage.
- 5. [NJ Italian American Heritage Foundation News](#)**  
This section provides abstracts of news related to the Foundation's activities, programs and events. The Foundation is a not-for-profit organization established for the purpose of raising private donations and executing statewide activities. The Foundation is affiliated with the Institute, but is not a part of the Commission. For more detailed information, please visit the Foundation's website at [www.italiannewjersey.com](http://www.italiannewjersey.com)
- 6. [Italian American Community News](#)**  
This section provides abstracts of news related to the Italian American community in New Jersey, in which the Commission is generally involved.

## VI. Projects

### 1. NJ-ITALY COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES

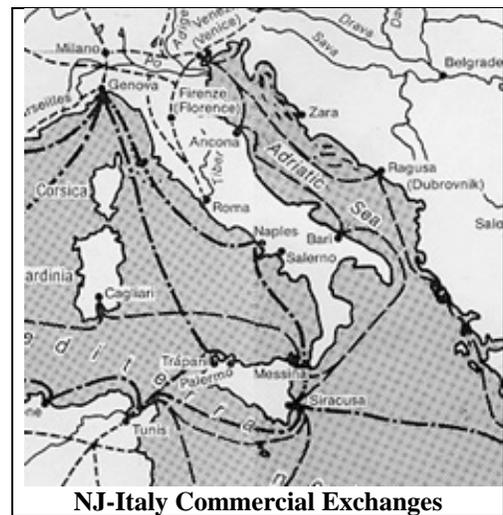
Following a request from the Governor and representatives of the Italian Government in February 2004, the Commission began to design educational programs that would highlight the commercial and investment opportunities between the State of New Jersey and the various regions of Italy. The Commission set out to canvas the New Jersey private sector and contacted representatives of the regional governments of Italy and found significant interest in fostering programs with the New Jersey government to promote commercial exchanges with Italy. In May 2004, the International Relations Committee created a Subcommittee called the Italian Commercial Exchange Council, which formally brought in the private sector to develop ideas.

#### Trade with Italy

- Over \$470 million in exports from New Jersey
- 9<sup>th</sup> largest export destination for NJ
- Top 10 importing partner for United States
- \$25 billion in imports from Italy
- Much comes through NJ ports and airports

#### Possible Programs

- Business Conferences on Italian Opportunities
- Trade Mission to Italy
- Italian Business Roadshow to New Jersey
- Italian American Chamber of Commerce
- NJ Trade Representative in Italy



### 2. NJ-ITALY CULTURAL EXCHANGES

Similar to the Governor's mandate to explore increased commercial exchanges between New Jersey and Italy, the Governor tasked the Commission with the assessment of increasing major cultural exchanges. The Commission has reached out to the art, music, film communities in New Jersey and Italy and found strong demand for the development of a variety of possible programs. In May 2004, the International Relations Committee of the Commission created a second Subcommittee called the Italian Cultural Exchange Council, which organized members of the New Jersey community interested in promoting cultural exchanges.



#### Possible Projects

- Museum exchanges between Italy and NJ
- Creating Italian Art wings in NJ museums
- Exporting Italian American artwork from NJ
- Bringing Italian sporting events in NJ
- Importing Italian performing artists
- Teacher and student exchange programs
- Regional Italian cuisine demonstrations
- Sponsoring Italian American filmmakers

### **3. CASA ITALIANA STATEWIDE CULTURAL CENTER**

After the establishment of the Institute for Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick in 2003, the Commission began exploratory discussions with the Rutgers administration for the development of a statewide Italian cultural center on campus. Provisionally named the “Casa Italiana”, the project involves the construction of a 10,000 square foot facility that would house the Commission and the Institute offices, offices for the Rutgers University Departments of Italian and Italian Studies Committee and facilities for the public and students. While architectural renderings and initial contractual arrangements have been on going, the project would be expected to be completed in 2007 for an approximate cost of \$4 million.

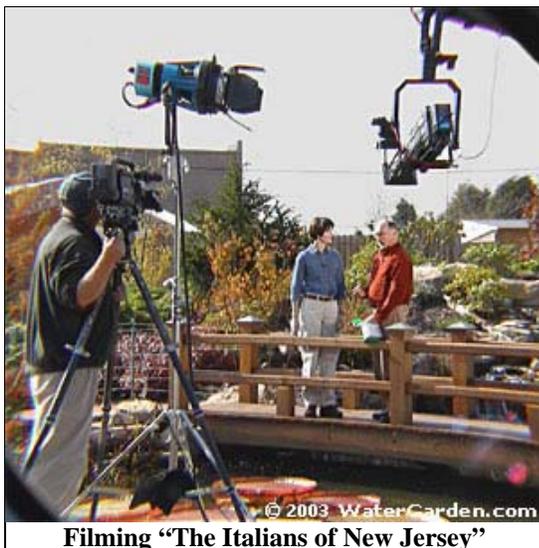


#### **Casa Italiana Features**

- Large multimedia public auditorium
- Conference and lecture rooms
- Art displays and Sculpture garden
- Audio-visual technology center
- Multiple office facilities and library
- Lounges and terraces

### **4. NJN DOCUMENTARY: “The Italians of New Jersey: A Legacy of Achievement”**

In order to combat negative media images of Italian Americans in New Jersey and to fill the information void of the current status of the descendants of Italian immigrants to New Jersey, the Commission initiated collaboration on a documentary with New Jersey Network. Provisionally entitled “The Italians of New Jersey”, this groundbreaking documentary attempts to answer the question “Where are the Italians of New Jersey today?” Since the beginning of 2004, hundreds of hours of footage have been shot of prominent Italian American professionals, academics, leaders and notables. In this production, the virtues of the Italian culture are explored in the context of achieving success and remembering heritage.



#### **Highlights of the Documentary**

- Immigrating from multiple regions of Italy
- Historical population and cultural centers in NJ
- Locating the 2<sup>nd</sup> mm Italian descendants today
- From discrimination to leadership
- Fighting negative media images
- Professions of Italian Americans in NJ
- Evolution of Italian American culture
- Preserving the Italian culture and language
- Renewed interest in ancestry
- Uniting the Italian American community

## 5. COMMUNITY YOUTH PROJECTS

Working with the Italian American community in New Jersey to promote Italian Heritage, the Community Advisory Council of the Commission is exploring a series of potential programs, which are mainly targeted for the Italian American Youth. These programs are intended to assist young Italian Americans, as well as to preserve the language, culture and even the waning artisan skills that are in high demand in New Jersey. The Commission believes that supporting and fostering awareness in the Italian American youth is critical to preserving the culture.



**Commission and the Future**

<i>Proposed Community Youth Projects</i>	
<b>Projects</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Italian Artisan Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering artisan exchanges to preserve skills                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Statewide demonstrations in communities</li> <li>○ Fairs with products uniquely developed in Italy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Crafts could include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Venetian glass-blowing</li> <li>○ Tuscan leather and gold jewelry</li> <li>○ Neapolitan cameos &amp; lacquered wood</li> <li>○ Italian marble work</li> <li>○ Italian wine-making</li> <li>○ Italian cuisine</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Artisan vocational school for NJ youth</li> </ul>
<b>Mentoring Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridging the Italian American business community</li> <li>• Career mentoring programs for students</li> <li>• Create internship opportunities for students</li> </ul>
<b>Italian Youth Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory of current programs in existence</li> <li>• Creating week-long or month-long Summer Programs                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Similar to Governor's School, Boy's/Girl's State, OSIA</li> <li>○ Seminars on history, language, heritage and culture</li> <li>○ For general public, or selective to build Youth Leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Creating statewide Youth Trips to Italy                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Weeklong, chaperoned summer trips to Italy</li> <li>○ Similar to current high school summer trips</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Italian American Scholarships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing statewide inventory &amp; calendar</li> <li>• General scholarships vs. focused scholarships</li> <li>• Scholarships for college vs. summer study in Italy</li> <li>• Creating guidelines for student follow-ups &amp; thank-yous</li> </ul>