MINERS, 
MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES
Dedicated
to the Members
of the Paisano Club
of the Upper Peninsula
PREFACE

My research on the Italians in Michigan's Upper Peninsula dates back to 1982. Prior to that time, as a new comer to the Upper Peninsula of Italian ancestry, I had heard stories of the concentrations of Italians in the mining regions of the Peninsula. However that was as far as my knowledge went as there were no books nor articles readily available on the subject. Most of what was known was passed down through oral tradition.

Then in the summer of 1981 this changed. I had an fortuitous meeting with Msgr. David Spelgatti the founder of the Paisano Club of the Upper Peninsula and Leonard Altobello. They indicated to me that the Paisano Club was seeking a researcher who could utilize their research funds to study the Italians in the Upper Peninsula. After careful consideration for nearly six months, I accepted the challenge. Between 1982 and the present time I have been gathering this history of the Italian immigrants in the Upper Peninsula. The result has been the accumulation of a wealth of information consisting of oral interviews, artifacts, books, manuscripts, and photographs. The oral interviews are housed at Northern Michigan University while the remainder of the data have been deposited at the Marquette County Historical Society in Marquette.

In the course of my work, I wrote a series of articles for a variety of reasons but they were never published. As the project expanded into a study of the Italians in Michigan I soon realized that many of these articles would not fit into the general history. As a result I decided to publish these articles as they are, hoping that they will best tell the history of the Italian experience in the Upper Peninsula.

I would like to thank Edie Schultz, the graphic designer and Karen Smith, the typist for their artistic talent and technical assistance. A hearty thank you goes out to all those people, especially the Italian-Americans, in the Upper Peninsula who provided me with information that has made this small contribution to ethnic history possible.

Marquette, Michigan

Russell M. Magnaghi
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Chapter 1
UPPER MICHIGAN'S ITALIAN HERITAGE

Colonial Era The Italian heritage of Upper Michigan can be traced back to the colonial era and the days of the French regime in the 17th century. Numerous Italians served the French government in the Great Lakes country in a variety of capacities. The only non-French Jesuit missionary to serve in Ontario was Francesco Giuseppe Bressani, S.J. (1626-1672). He arrived in Canada in 1642 and remained until 1650, working among the Huron Indians. At one point he was captured by the Iroquois. After his return to Europe he published an account of his stay in Canada called A Brief Relation (1653).

The Tonti brothers were also active in the Great Lakes country. Enrico de Tonti (1649/50-1704), the son of Neapolitan parents, had sought asylum in France after being involved in an unsuccessful revolt in Naples against the Spanish viceroy. He fought in Europe and lost an arm to a grenade. In 1678 he came to Canada and joined La Salle. In August 1679 he reached the Straits of Mackinac. When a group of deserters fled the area Enrico followed them to Sault Ste. Marie. Throughout the 1680s and 1690s Tonti constantly passed through the Straits of Mackinac as he went between Montreal and the Mississippi Valley. In 1695 he left Mackinac to visit the Assiniboine but it is not known how far he actually went into the Lake Superior country on this expedition as he was detained by poor weather. The Indians wherever he went were in awe of his bras defer (iron arm). Tenacious, courageous and a good organizer, Enrico de Tonti was a significant figure in the French development of the West. In 1704 he died of yellow fever in Mobile, Alabama. Enrico Tonti was an intrepid explorer of North America who pioneered the way into the heart of the continent. He was also a successful businessman who took a practical approach to the problems of the inland fur trade. Both Indians and whites were
fascinated by his arm and in awe of his endurance, tenacity, courage, and organizing ability.

His brother, Alfonso (1659-1727) who had the title of Baron of Paludy, did not possess the character nor the brilliant career of his older brother. He too joined the French army and became a captain in the colonial regular troops. Alfonso became closely associated with Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac. In 1695 Cadillac was recalled from Fort Buade at St. Ignace, Michigan to account for his activities. Although the post had been ordered closed and the traders evacuated because of low prices on a glutted beaver pelt market in France, Governor Frontenac appointed Alfonso Tonti to serve in Cadillac’s place. He left Montreal with 25 to 30 indentured servants and a cargo of trade goods valued at nearly 35,000 livres. The understanding was that Tonti would receive 50% of the profits realized from the sale. He commanded Fort Buade for only one year and during the time met his cousin Pierre-Charles de Liette and his brother Enrico.

When Cadillac founded Detroit in 1701 Alfonso was at his side as second in command. During the next four years when Cadillac was away on official business in Montreal or Quebec, Alfonso was placed in command. He was a good military commander who averted an Iroquois attack and kept several bands of Indians from trading with the English at Albany, New York. However his many debts caused him to direct his attention on an extensive trade which became a scandal at the French court and in 1705 he was removed from the post.

Alfonso was made commander at Fort Frontenac where his greed further eroded his military career. In 1711 he carried the governor's orders to Detroit and in June 1717 he was given the command of Detroit and by the end of the year his friend, Governor Vaudreuil recommended him for the cross of the Order of St. Louis. The decade which followed, saw Tonti’s greed run rampant and there was probably some truth in the accusation that he paid the governor 3,000 livres annually. In 1727 before he could be recalled he died in Detroit.

The father and son team of Marin, or in the Italian, Marini, served in the Upper Lakes country. Paul Marin de la Malgue (1692-1753) served in the West most of his life. In 1722 he was given command of the French post at modern Ashland, Wisconsin. He maintained the fur trade monopoly and also kept peace among the Sioux, Fox and Sac. In the process he made a fortune in furs. In the late 1740s he was given command of Green Bay, considered one of the most lucrative of all the western posts, and he did well. Later he served in the Ohio Valley. Joseph Marin, his son, followed his father into the West. Stationed at Fort Michilimackinac in 1737, two years later he went into northern Minnesota to discover mines and attempt to make peace with the Indians. In 1749 he was attached to the post at Ashland and in 1752 he replaced his father in the Mississippi Valley. Eventually he left New France. Although the Italians did not remain in the area, they were thus the first of many natives of Italy active in the area that would become Upper Michigan.

above: Picking rocks from the Contratto farm in Bessemer, Michigan. (Source: Paul Contratto)

**Early American Period**

Count Paolo Andreani visited the Lake Superior country in the summer of 1791 before the region had been given to the United States by the British. Andreani was leading a scientific expedition to study the shape of the earth. He took measurements at various locations enroute and is considered the first known European to circumnavigate Lake Superior at one time.

The next Italian to live in Upper Michigan was Reverend Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.P. (1806-1864). He was from Milan and was studying for the priesthood when Bishop Edward Fenwick invited him to serve the diocese of Cincinnati, which included the Upper Peninsula. He was ordained in 1830 and a few weeks later assigned to Mackinac Island, which had not seen a Catholic priest for many years. Upon his arrival he put the chapel of Ste. Anne in order and preached his sermons in French and English, using a translator for the Indians. He visited the people at St. Ignace, Sault Ste. Marie, and Green Bay. In 1833 he was reassigned to Wisconsin and then Iowa, where he was the pioneer priest of Catholicism.
Reverent Toussaint Santelli was ordained in Milan and then was invited by Bishop Rese of Detroit to serve the diocese of Michigan. Between August 1838 and August 1843 he was stationed on Mackinac Island. During this time he also engaged in the fur trade. Rev. Santelli never liked the cold climate and in the late summer of 1841 wrote to Bishop Blanc of New Orleans seeking an assignment in the southern diocese. This did not happen and for a few months Santelli served a parish in Monroe, Michigan, before he left for Italy in May, 1844.

A number of individuals with Italian names appear in the early Michigan censuses. In 1830 Batice Bario, Joseph Sutarrro, J.B. Brula, Paul Bolio, Francis Borbonno and John Battese Bonno were living in Chippewa County which included most of the Upper Peninsula. Most of the men were married with families but there is no indication of their occupation which was probably connected with the fur trade. In 1840 there were a number of individuals with Italian names at Mackinac Island including Father Santelli, Louis Santone, Antoine Pocca, Louis Gronada and Stephen Basso. Since they do not appear on the next census they were probably transient fur traders who moved on after the census was compiled. In the census of 1850 there appears the names of Edward Santorno born in Canada and Benjamin Pricora, a native of Pennsylvania. The names suggest Italian descent. However it would not be until the late 1850s that the first permanent Italian immigrants would arrive.

**Italy and America** In the late 19th century Italy went through the process of unification. However conditions remained poor for many Italians. There was a lack of arable land throughout the nation and there were few opportunities for Italian youth. High taxes had to be paid and many resented the money going to members of the royal family, who misused it. As a result, both men and women worked long and hard hours but never got ahead. Suddenly word arrived from America that there were jobs available to anyone who wanted to work.

In the United States and especially in the Upper Peninsula there was a great demand for laborers. In the 1840s the copper and iron mines were developed and labor was scarce. Unskilled workers who could easily work as trammers (loading ore into cars) were in demand. There were many other positions to be filled. Soon hundreds of young Italian men were headed for the Upper Peninsula. There was also a demand for lumber mill workers at the IXL Lumber Company in Hermansville. In the late 1890s workers were needed to help enlarge the locks at Sault Ste. Marie and to dig the power canal through the city. Once the latter was completed, industrial jobs were available at the Union Carbide Plant and at a tannery and woolen mill on the American side of the St. Mary's River. In Ontario jobs were available at the Algoma Steel Mill, at the Abitibi Paper Mill, on the Algoma Central Railway and in the iron mines it served. Other Italians interested in farming found good land in Mackinac County, in the Menominee valley in Dickinson County, in Houghton and Iron counties, and in the areas adjacent to Hurley, Wisconsin.

In Houghton and Keweenaw counties (the Copper Country), Italains settled in Trimountain, Painesdale, South Range, Baltic, Hancock, Franklin Mine, Coburghtown, Pewabic, Laurium, Red Jacket (Calumet), Mohawk and Ahmeek. In the various ranges of the iron country, Italians were scattered in a variety of communities: in Marquette County—Gwinn, Princeton, Austin, Ishpeming, and Negaunee; in Dickinson County—Vulcan, Norway, and Iron Mountain; in Iron County—Crystal Falls, Mansfield Township, Iron River, Caspian, Gaastra; in Gogebic County—Wakefield, Bessemer, Ramsay, Anvil, Jessievville, Bonnie Location; in Iron County, Wisconsin,—Hurley, Pence, Iron Belt, and Kimball. In Chippewa County the Italians were concentrated in Sault Ste. Marie, while in Mackinac County they were located just north of Cedarville and Hessel. In Menominee county the Italians were located in Hermansville.

The Italians of Upper Michigan came from throughout the Italian provinces. In Chippewa County they came chiefly from Abruzzo Molise, Umbria, and Latium. Italians from Trentino, Piedmont, Lom
bardy, Venetia, Abruzzo Molise, Latium, Friuli, Calabria, Sicily, Emilia-Romagna, and Liguria resided in Dickinson county. The Italians in Gogebic County originated from Piedmont, Trentino, Calabria, Venetia, Abruzzo Molise, and Sicily. In Houghton and Keweenaw counties about 80% of the Italians were from Piedmont, while others were from Lombardy (5%), Tuscany (10%), Liguria (2%), and other provinces (3%). In Iron County they came from Piedmont, Trentino, Friuli, and Sicily. The half dozen families in Mackinac County came from Campania, the area around Naples. In Marquette County, Italians from Piedmont, Lombardy and Venetia settled in Gwinn and Negaunee, while Calabrese settled in Ishpeming. There were also a few Sicilians in the county. In Menominee County most of the Italains were from the province of Venetia. Scattered throughout the communities there were other Italians but the above list includes the largest populations.

**Pioneer Italians** The earliest Italians to arrive in Upper Michigan in the 19th century—the vanguard of Italian immigration—began to arrive on the eve of the Civil War. The census of 1860 shows the first small group of Italians. Joseph Gatan, Joseph Coppo, Vital Coppo and Bart Quello were all miners and listed their nation of birth as Sardinia. Only Joseph Gatan was married, to a Canadian, Penney.

below: Izzo Shoe Repair shop with Tony Izzo on the right. Taken in October 1922. Iron Mountain. (Source: Ralph Izzo)
Bart Quello (1837-1919) emigrated to Quebec in 1859 and in the same year settled in Houghton County at the Huron Mine location. He was employed at the Franklin Mine until 1863, when he went to work for Calumet and Hecla; he helped to sink the first C&H mine shaft in 1867. For the next few years he worked for various mines, then purchased some land west of Calumet and became a lumber contractor. He provided timbers for mines throughout the Copper Country. Quello was active in the political life of the community and served several terms as councilman for the village of Red Jacket. Bart Quello is an excellent example of the aggressive immigrant businessman.

Another pioneer to the Copper Country was Paul Coppo (1845-1896). He emigrated from Italy to Portage Lake in 1866 and was first a laborer, settling near Franklin Mine. He purchased some land to the west of the location, established a dairy farm and was engaged in agricultural pursuits throughout his life.

A third pioneer to the Copper Country was Vital Coppo (1842-1910), who came from Piedmont, as did all of the above immigrants. Many Italians from Piedmont followed them to settle in the Copper Country. These early settlers spread the word to friends and relatives in the Old Country. Coppo first landed in Quebec in 1859 and a year later moved to Calumet. At first he was employed as a miner at Calumet & Hecla. Later he secured large timberland holdings, operated on them for many years and acquired substantial wealth. He was the director of the New Haven Coal Mining Company of Owosso and owner of the Coppo Block. Coppo was a charter member of the Italian Beneficial Society of Calumet and was its treasurer for 20 years.

In Marquette County the earliest Italian pioneers were Philip and Josephine Marchetti, who arrived in the summer of 1864. Philip, born on Corsica, moved to the mainland and worked in the marble quarries of Carrara. Then he migrated to western Massachusetts, where he worked with other Italians on railroad tunnel construction. Finally he and his wife moved with a group of Irish immigrants to Eagle Mills, east of Negaunee. Philip, with his son-in-law Batista Barasa, got involved in real estate and became wealthy. The two of them also developed the Barasa Iron Mining Company, which worked property east of Negaunee for a number of years. It was the only iron mine in the Upper Peninsula owned by Italian immigrants.

**Italian Miners** The main reason for Italian immigration to the western Upper Peninsula was copper and iron mining. By the 1860s northern Italian men began to settle in the Copper Country, where they obtained jobs in the mines. The same process was followed in the iron mines of the Marquette, Menominee and Gogebic ranges. The
miners were in desperate need of large numbers of unskilled workers. At first the Italians were employed as trammers, which meant that they shoveled ore into mine cars. As they gained experience the Italians worked their way up in the mine hierarchy and eventually became miners. Usually their unfamiliarity with the English language kept the Italians from moving upward. Once the language was mastered, however, progress was rapid and the Italians became foremen, paymasters, and other workers higher in the mining echelon.

Businesses Once the Italian immigrants became established within the community and no longer wanted to work in the mines many of them developed their own businesses. The variety of businesses ranged from saloonkeepers to flower growers. The most common business was that of saloonkeeper, a business easily entered. The saloon acted as a social and recreation center for the immigrant men, and Italian saloons were found in most communities. As they prospered some of the saloonkeepers also became liquor and beer distributors. Many of their descendants continue to operate liquor distributorships in the Upper Peninsula. A novel development occurred in Iron Mountain in 1905, when a group of Italians opened a cooperative saloon that sold beers at two for a nickel, half of what other saloons charged.

The other most common business to attract immigrant Italians was the grocery or food store. These stores in many cases catered to Italian customers with Italian food products such as dried cod, pasta, and olive oil. Immigrants found that they could open such stores with little capital, work long hours and eventually develop profitable businesses. In Iron Mountain and in other communities cooperative grocery stores allowed members to pay dues and buy groceries at a discount.

The third common business associated with immigrants was the Italian bakery. Every community had its bakery that delivered warm bread directly to the home in the summer and winter. Today, unfortunately, few of these bakeries exist.
Italians also got into a variety of businesses. Some, like John Rastello in Calumet, operated tailor shops. The Paveglia brothers opened the Paveglia Granite and Marble Company in Marquette and then established other branches in Iron Mountain and Iron River. They also quarried granite in Amberg, Wisconsin. Macaroni makers like Lavorini and Campioni in Hancock opened up small factories and provided fresh pasta to the community. The nationally known cheese companies Stella and Frigo both got their starts in the Upper Peninsula. In the area of transportation, Cesar Lucchesi in the 1920s opened up a bus service between South Range and Houghton in the Copper Country. In order to operate year-round, Lucchesi pioneered snow removal several years prior to public removal by the county. Many Italians operated steamship and railroad ticket offices for the numerous immigrants who constantly traveled to and from Italy. In Hurley, Wisconsin, a number of Italians incorporated the Hurley National Bank, which lasted nearly a decade before it closed during the Depression of the 1930s. In other communities Italian immigrants served on the boards of directors of many banks, especially those in the Copper Country, while their children were hired because they were bilingual and could serve immigrant customers. In 1898 a group of Italians formed the Italian Mutual Fire Insurance Company in Laurium, which is still in operation. Many Italians like the Barasas and Marchetti of Negaunee became wealthy dealing in real estate. Batista Barasa went further and developed the only Italian-owned iron mine, for which he issued stock. In this same vein, a group of Calumet Italian immigrants around 1906 purchased the New Haven Coal Mining Company, which had its mines in Owosso in the Lower Peninsula. Other Italians like the Bugnis in the Hurley area were involved in lumbering.

Agriculture Although the land and climate were not conducive to agriculture, some Italians became involved in farming. This was true in Mackinac County, where some half dozen families developed farms in the area north of Hessel. Italian farmers were also found in the Menominee River valley in Dickinson County, and in Gogebic, Iron and Houghton counties. Usually they cultivated potatoes and raised dairy cattle. Some of the Italians in Dickinson County grew and harvested tobacco which they sold locally. In the Calumet area Batista Perona accidentally became an important producer of flowers in the Copper Country. Today Marcelini’s Greenhouse in Vulcan continues this tradition. Other Italians combined ranching with the meat packing industry. One of these was Alfred Angeli of Iron River. He obtained several head of cattle from the St. Paul stockyards, brought them to the Upper Peninsula and developed a farm where the cattle were fattened. Then they were sold to local butchers or used by Angeli. The Peronas of Caspian followed a similar pattern but also raised hogs and chickens that they sold to the local markets.

Women and Business Italian women followed the traditional practice and remained in the home. Unlike urban areas, the Upper Peninsula had no factory jobs for the women. Instead they augmented the family earnings by taking boarders into their homes. This was hard and continuous work but it did add to the income. Besides maintaining the house the women also maintained large gardens and raised animals to further augment their family’s resources.

When their husbands died, the widows usually either continued operating a boarding house and raising vegetables and animals, or developed new businesses. A common practice was for widows to take in laundry or to take jobs as scrubwomen. In a few cases widows and even married women operated stores either with their husbands or without. However this latter activity was rare, especially for the women whose husbands were alive.

Professionals Among the immigrant population there were some professionals. There were a number of physicians: Dr. Julius Menistrina of Iron Mountain, Dr. Eugene Vercellini of Calumet, Dr. Joseph Vercellini of Negaunee, and Dr. C. H. Rodi of Calumet. In Calumet there was the Red Jacket or Italian Pharmacy, which specialized in imported medicines from Italy and Europe.

Politics From a very early period Italian immigrants became involved in local politics, making them unique among Michigan Italians. For instance in April of 1875 Michael Borgo served on the first village council of Calumet. In the years that followed there was an Italian on the council every year until 1906. This tradition was duplicated in most communities in the Upper Peninsula. Other Italians, like policeman Michael Tasson of Ishpeming and Cesar Cappo of South Range, acted as ward bosses, making sure that the immigrants became citizens and voted in the election.

On the state level the first Italian immigrant from the Upper Peninsula was John DaPrato of Iron Mountain. He was first elected on the Republican ticket in 1913 and won a number of elections until 1920, when he declined to run again. Since that time the children of immigrants, like Dominic Jacobetti of Negaunee, continue this tradition of serving as legislators in Lansing.
Contrary to one stereotype, most of the Italians in the Upper Peninsula eagerly sought American citizenship. It was promoted by individuals in the community, for example Michael Tasson and Cesar Cappo. Organizations were also formed to promote citizenship. In 1909 the Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula was formed and one of its objectives was to get the immigrants to become citizens. There was also the Lega Cittadina (Citizens’ League), whose aim it was to make citizens of the immigrants and get them to vote. The non-political mutual beneficial societies also promoted citizenship.

"Radical" Activities In some cases the Italian immigrants became involved in what could be perceived as "radical activities" by the people of the times. Some Italians developed cooperative stores, although they were not strictly cooperative in the sense of the Finnish cooperatives. Usually the Italians formed the co-ops as strictly business ventures. In 1913 there was the Italian Cooperative Company in Iron Mountain and two years later the Capestrano Mercantile Company opened in the same city. The short-lived (1916-1917) Italian Cooperative Company was located in Negaunee. As mentioned earlier in 1905 there was even an Italian cooperative saloon.

Over the years, contrary to the impression fostered by some writers, there were labor strikes throughout the Upper Peninsula. Labor was not happy with working conditions, hours nor wages. In 1887 Italian railroad workers of the Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic struck, and they struck again in 1894 against the Wisconsin & Michigan Railway. During the 1894 miner's strike on the Gogebic Range and the strike on the Marquette Range in the following year, Italians were involved. In 1904 Italians working on the Neebish channel in the St. Mary's River struck. Hundreds of Italians also were involved in the copper strike of 1913-1914.

There were a number of short-lived newspapers that tried to promote radical ideas and socialism among the Italians. *La Democrazione Italiana* seems to have been a radical newspaper, and lasted for about 1 1/2 months. It was followed by *La Sentinella* (The Sentinel), a socialist newspaper edited by T. Petriella. It closed down in 1906. During the 1913-1914 copper strike, the *Miners' Bulletin*, the labor organ, had about 25% of its copy written in Italian.

Organizations Mutual beneficial lodges or societies were common in the Italian communities throughout the Upper Peninsula. These societies, for a monthly fee of 50 cents, provided accident, sickness and death benefits to members. There were over 125 such organizations in the Upper Peninsula. The first of these was the Italian Mutual Beneficial Society, founded in Calumet in 1875. It was the second oldest in the state of Michigan.

The membership included either men or women and usually was limited to Italians and sometimes restricted to Italians from a certain region or community. For instance in Calumet there were so many people from the village of San Martino de Canavese that they formed their own lodge. In other towns people from a specific region, such as Lombarda-Venetia or Quatro Abruzzi, limited membership to only people from that province. This sense of regionalism was important among the Italians.

These lodges were primarily social organizations which also provided certain health and death benefits. They celebrated with dances, usually had their bocci courts next to the hall and had great parades and dinner dances to celebrate the 4th of July and Columbus Day (October 12th). In later years they also developed charitable and heritage programs. Today there are a number of these lodges still in existence: Paisano Clubs of the Upper Peninsula with branches in Ishpeming, Iron Mountain and Gogebic County; Christopher Columbus Society and the Women's Auxiliary of Sault Ste. Marie; the Piave Society of Ironwood; the Duke of Abruzzi Society of Caspian; the Christopher Columbus Society of Laurium-Calumet; the Bella Venezia Society of Hermansville; Lady Druids and Druids of Negaunee; the Daughters of Italy of South Range; and the most recent organization, the Loggia delle Neve of the Order of the Sons of Italy in Marquette County.
Besides these traditional organizations there were a number of nontraditional clubs throughout the Upper Peninsula. There was the Italian Instruction Club of Iron Mountain; the Italian Republican Club, founded in 1908 in Calumet; also in Calumet the Italian Businessmen’s Club. In Hancock there was the New Industrial Benevolent Society and the Italian Lodge of the Modern Maccabees in Calumet. In 1914 the Workers’ International Benefit Society was organized in Iron Mountain.

Religion In the two communities with large Italian populations, Calumet and Iron Mountain, national parishes were established by the Catholic Church. In 1897 St. Mary’s Church was dedicated and served the Italian population of Calumet until the 1960s, when due to population declines the various Catholic churches were consolidated. The other church was the Immaculate Conception, which opened in 1902 in Iron Mountain. This church still serves the community although it is no longer a national parish. In the other communities Italians attended the local Catholic churches without regard to ethnic origin. The Italians took a great deal of pride in their churches and were strong financial supporters of them. A characteristic of churches attended by Italians was the excellent choir.

Religious organizations were not an important feature of the Italian communities in the Upper Peninsula. However, in Ishpeming there was the St. Rocco and St. Anthony Societies, which combined in 1942. Today the Society still celebrates St. Rocco’s day in mid-August with Mass, dinner and a carnival. In Iron Mountain there was the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Society.

Some of the Protestant churches tried to work with the immigrants in various communities in the Upper Peninsula. In Calumet between 1907 and 1917 the Presbyterian church established a mission for the Italians and had an Italian minister serve them. The Presbyterians also established a community center for all immigrants in Caspian. Later this center was purchased by the village.

Culture and Education The Italians established a number of Italian-language newspapers. The longest lasting and most famous of these papers was Il Minature Italiano (The Italian Miner), which began in the late 1890s and continued publishing into the 1930s. The company also operated a print shop which did work for various Italian organizations. Little is known about La Demacrazione Italiana which lasted for approximately 1 1/2 months and was published in Calumet. La Sentinella (The Sentinel) was published in Calumet from the late 1890s until around 1907. In its later years it was a socialist newspaper. La Nostra Terra (Our Land) was published in Hurley, Wisconsin, from 1903 through 1913 when it became an English-language newspaper. The magazine Pro Nobis was a cultural magazine published in Calumet by the Legion of the Knights of Romulus.

Italians also formed dramatic groups. There was the Italian Hall Dramatic Group in Calumet, which flourished around 1910; and a group in Negaunee presented Italian farces in the 1920s at the local high school. A similar group existed in South Range and special puppet shows were presented for the children. Elsewhere Italians who enjoyed singing and acting presented impromptu plays and skits. Most Italians proved to be excellent singers and musicians. Bands were a common feature in the communities, and later, Italian-Americans formed a variety of orchestras which performed on local radio, among other places.

In most cases Italian-American children attended the local public schools. Parents were concerned about their education and sent their children on to college. A good example of this, Bernard Barasa, the son of an early pioneer family in Negaunee, who became a lawyer and established a successful practice and reputation in Chicago. There is one instance in which the Italians in Calumet in 1910 established a summer school to teach the Italian language.
Family Life and the Home Traditionally the family was the basic unit in Italian society. Strong family ties were important among the Italian immigrants in the Upper Peninsula. Regionalism was also an important characteristic. Most households kept boarders to augment the family income. Women kept large gardens and canned the produce for winter use. Cows produced dairy products for home use and sale. Hogs were butchered in the fall and large quantities of sausage and salame were made. In the fall grapes were imported from California and most families made 150 gallons of wine for their home use. In many cases the wine was sold to the boarders at a profit. The grape skins were further distilled into a potent liquor, grappa, which was mixed with coffee. Italian diets were maintained. Many of the southern Italians who used a variety of salt water fish found these in the Italian stores in their communities. The women remained in the home, lacking outside factory-type employment, and took care of boarders in the home. Many Italian women were midwives and others had an extensive knowledge of folk medicine.
Entertainment and Amusements Most entertainment and amusements centered around the home. The saloon, usually owned by an Italian, was also a social center, especially for single males. Morra, a game of chance using the hands, was popular, as was bocci, a form of lawn bowling and horseshoes. Tombola, a form of Italian bingo, was also played. In the summer picnics were usually held on a weekly basis by groups of families. Dances, usually in the home on the weekend, were common. Home entertainment and visits with family and friends were common and popular. Convocations of the lodges usually brought friends and relatives together from throughout the Peninsula in the summer. The two most important holidays celebrated by Italians in the Upper Peninsula were July 4th and Columbus Day on October 12th. Parades and dinner-dances were a common feature of these events.

By the late 20th century the Italian-American population in the Upper Peninsula had declined. This has been caused chiefly by the decline in copper and iron mines. Young people find that they must leave the area in order to secure employment. The Italian-Americans who remain maintain their heritage.

The reports of the Federal census bureau between 1890 and 1930 show a conservative number of Italian immigrants in the Upper Peninsula. In 1906 when vice consul James Lisa of Calumet took a special census for the Italian government he found over 5000 Italians in Houghton County alone! In 1900 there were only 937 Italians in Wayne County while double that number lived in Houghton County. In this year 74% of the Italians in Michigan lived in the Upper Peninsula. The number of Italians peaked in 1910 at 8278 or 49% of the state total and then began to decline. The unsteady production of the mines...
caused many Italians to leave for other mining and industrial areas. Copper Country Italians moved to the iron ranges of Minnesota and farther west to the copper mines of Butte, Montana and the silver mines of Idaho. Others from throughout the Peninsula went south to the coal mines of Illinois, Alabama, Oklahoma and Kansas while some Negaunee Italians migrated to the copper mines of eastern Arizona. The Giovanni Andreni family moved from Hancock to the mines of Illinois, then Alabama before settling in an agricultural colony near Jacksonville, Florida. Later they returned to Illinois. Members of the Manci family in Iron Mountain left and became successful farmers in Daphne, Alabama on the east shore of Mobile Bay. During the gold rush in Alaska, many Upper Peninsula Italians headed north to seek their fortunes.

The infamous copper strike of 1913-14 caused not only Italian miners but other ethnic miners to leave the Copper Country for Detroit and the booming auto industry. Other Italians found ready employment in Racine, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

As a result in 1920 Upper Peninsula Italians constituted 26% of the state total of Italians but a decade later they had dropped to 12% of the total. Today you can find many Italian-Americans in the Detroit area who trace their roots to the Upper Peninsula.
Name: Girardi, B.  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1872  
To US:  
Occupation:  
Kant hooker

Name: Birardi, Delide  
Relation: Wife  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1880  
To US: 1892

Name: Girardi, Mike  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1899  
To US:  
Occupation: Michigan

Name: Luna, Antonio  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1858  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Turcato, Peter  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1873  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Silvio, Rudolph  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1872  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Austria

Name: Tognali, Paul  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1870  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Austria

Name: Girardi, Costante  
Relation: Brother  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1876  
To US: 1900  
Occupation: Austria

Name: Sudiro, Antonio  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1866  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Girardi, Andrew  
Relation: Brother  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1853  
To US: 1890  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Maltauri, Alessio  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1855  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Faccio, Mariano  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1848  
To US: 1892  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Faccio, Madalina  
Relation: Wife  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1849  
To US: 1892

Name: Faccio, Frank  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1874  
To US: 1892  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Faccio, Philip  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1875  
To US: 1892  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Faccio, Arthur  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1876  
To US: 1892

Name: Faccio, Fred  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1894  
To US: 1892

Name: Faccio, Lena  
Relation: Daughter  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1897  
To US: 1892

Name: Faccio, Emma  
Relation: Daughter  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1898  
To US: 1892

Name: Faccio, Clara  
Relation: Daughter  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1899  
To US: 1892

Name: Benett, Antonio  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1865  
To US: 1900  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Marchi, Ludovico  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1880  
To US: 1900

Name: Floricini, Antonio  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1875  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Floricini, Leonard  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1884  
To US: 1900  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Torcado, Antonio  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1874  
To US: 1895  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Faccio, Lucia  
Relation: Daughter-in-law  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1874  
To US: 1896

Name: Faccio, Basilio  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1859  
To US: 1893  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Faccio, Luigia  
Relation: Wife  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1864  
To US: 1897

Name: Sudiro, Louis  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1860  
To US: 1898  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Palanto, Giuseppe  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1873  
To US: 1900  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Palanto, Rosa A.  
Relation: Wife  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1892  
To US: 1900

Name: Palanto, Giuseppe  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1899  
To US: 1900

Name: Posinato, Terso  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1855  
To US: 1893  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Posinato, Peter  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1874  
To US: 1893  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Posinato, Augie  
Relation: Son  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1879  
To US: 1893  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Posinato, Victoria  
Relation: Daughter  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1884  
To US: 1897  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Storti, Stefan  
Relation: Head  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1868  
To US: 1898  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Cornali, Gio Batista  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1838  
To US: 1900  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Parlati, Lorenzo  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1848  
To US: 1885  
Occupation: Italy

Name: Cornali, Dominico  
Relation: Boarder  
Birth Yr: Birthplace: 1877  
To US: 1899  
Occupation: Italy

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Chapter 4

JAMES R. LISA: PIONEER COPPER COUNTRY
BUSINESSMAN AND CIVIC LEADER

One of the early immigrants to Red Jacket/Calumet was James R. Lisa whose life in the Copper Country was a success story. Lisa whose parents were Joseph Lisa and Josephine Bobba Lisa, was born in November 1843 in the north Italian village of San Martino Canavese located north of Turin in the province of Piedmont. The majority of Italians who settled in the Calumet area came from this province because the first immigrants wrote home and told their friends and relatives of the economic opportunity of the region. Originally the Lisa family was in the baking business and they sent James to school sensing his ability as a good student. However the sudden death of his parents forced James out of school. Later when he was sixteen years of age a nobleman saw to the completion of his education.

In 1870 he married a local girl, Martha Nida (1851-1934) and soon two daughters were born to them. Due to high taxation Lisa decided to migrate to America with his family. In 1875 they made the long sea voyage to the United States and temporarily settled in Chicago. Hearing of the copper boom to the north, Lisa moved to Calumet and got a job at the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company working underground. He lasted one day! He either quit or was fired by a Captain Milligan. Later the two men became good friends and laughed over the experience. Two years later in 1877 Lisa became a clerk with Nappa & Company, a Finnish dry goods store in Calumet. During his years with the firm, Lisa learned the English language and how to cope with his new environment.

Lisa was prospering by 1880. His family now consisted of a third daughter and his brother, Savin, a mine timberman was living with them. Having successfully weathered his encounter with American life, Lisa decided to go it alone. He took his savings and opened his
own grocery store on Fifth Street, the main thoroughfare in Calumet. Within a decade, new quarters were needed and in 1890 he purchased property on the corner of Sixth and Oak Streets and erected a large two-story brick structure known as the Lisa Block. His store sold Italian and American products, dry goods, boots and shoes, hardware, and crockery along with steamship tickets. The store quickly became a commercial and social center for the Italians.

The Lisa family grew and by 1900 there were seven daughters: Constance, Josephine, Julia, Irene, Mary, Angeline, Catherine, and one son, James, Jr. Savin had moved to Butte, Montana where he operated a large grocery store, but another brother, John who had arrived in 1896 lived with the family in their spacious apartments over the store. John was a printer and later would publish La Sentinella, one of two Italian-language newspapers in the Calumet-Laurium area. Italian traditions were maintained in the home where north Italian cuisine was always served. The children learned Italian because their mother did not speak English. At first the family attended Ste. Anne's Catholic church as did all of the Italians until 1897 when St. Mary's Italian Catholic church was dedicated. Despite her large family and many social responsibilities, Martha Lisa found time to act as a midwife to Italian women. She was highly regarded throughout the community and is remembered to this day in many parts of the western and central Upper Peninsula.

Lisa was a prominent figure in the civic life of the community and was identified with movements for civic improvement. Following a tradition which dated back to April 1875 when Michael Borgo became the first Italian immigrant to serve on the Calumet village council at its first session, Lisa was a member of the council for two terms: 1893-1895 and 1897-1899. He was an active Republican, ran for a number of local offices, and served on the jury which investigated mining accidents.

The Italian government was concerned about the welfare of its subjects in the Upper Peninsula. For many years the consul in Chicago took care of the immigrants. However as the number of Italians in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northern Wisconsin grew, the Chicago consulate was unable to provide the proper assistance. As a result Lisa was appointed the first vice consul, working through the Chicago office in the fall of 1895. He took his job seriously and kept in touch with Italian immigrants living throughout his district which at first consisted of portions of northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. His office was located in the store and his daughter, Angeline was placed in charge of its affairs. The location was a beehive of activity as Italians dropped in seeking advice, small loans, official
papers, documents and steamship tickets. Every so often consular officials from Chicago visited Calumet for several days at a time and were always welcomed visitors and guests.

When trouble or problems developed Lisa was always ready to assist distressed immigrants. He acted as a mediator between American officials and the newly arrived immigrants. For instance in June 1896 when Jennie Valle, a 14 year old Italian girl ran away from home, local residents were informed to notify either her parents or Lisa if she was found. In 1906 he was directed by the Italian government to take a special census of the Italian immigrants living in the various communities within his jurisdiction. He faithfully carried out this charge and the final census showed that there were over 5,000 Italians living in Houghton County alone. Lisa was often the main speaker at Italian celebrations such as Columbus Day or dedications.

Everyone found Lisa to be a "man of beautiful character and of warm friendship." He was known and loved by Italians throughout the region. In 1903 and then again in 1910 King Victor Emanuilll III made him a knight and then an official of the Order of the Crown of Italy. The medal which he was presented with is preserved in the archives at Michigan Technological University in Houghton. He resigned his position as consul a few years before his death when he felt that he could no longer effectively carry out his official functions. However after his retirement he continued to maintain an interest in the affairs and progress of Italians all over the Upper Peninsula.

Despite his busy schedule, Lisa found the time to be an active member of numerous lodges and societies in Calumet. He was deeply involved with the Societa Italiana di Mutua Beneficenza. As other Italian societies were organized like the San Martino and Ettore Perrone societies and the Italian American Federation of the Upper Peninsula he became a member of those as well. He was also a member of the Odd Fellows and of the Ancient Order of United Workmen.

In the years prior to his death following a partial stroke, Lisa was in declining health. He died in his home in the late afternoon of April 11, 1916. The newspapers of the Upper Peninsula paid him tribute. Unfortunately there are no copies of Il Minatore Italiano available to review to get the reaction of the local Italian-language newspapers. The Calumet News called him "a pioneer resident of Calumet and one of the best known citizens of the community." The Houghton Daily Mining Gazette made note of his excellent human qualities while the Daily Mining Journal of Marquette called him "one of the most widely known Italian residents of the Upper Peninsula." Italians from throughout the Upper Peninsula traveled to Calumet to attend his funeral.

This biographical sketch provides a view of a successful Italian businessman. However there were other immigrants in Calumet who were as successful and active in community affairs such as: Bernard Bracco (baker), Vital Coppo (lumber and real estate), Attilio Castiliano (banking), Michael Richetta (undertaking and livery), John Rastello (tailor), G. Martini (wholesale liquor), Bart Quello (lumber and real estate), Vincent Vairo (contractor), and James Torreano (merchant).
Calumet, Michigan attracted hundreds of Italian immigrants from the middle of the 19th century drawn by the jobs in the mines. As early as 1886, St. Louis Church which later became St. Anne’s was used by French and Italian parishioners. It should be noted that most of the Italians were from the province of Piedmont whose dialect was closely akin to French.

In 1893 the Italians pushed for their own church and Bishop Vertin sent Father Anthony Molinari to Calumet to minister to the needs of the Italians. Molinari had been born in Italy in 1867 and after he came to the United States became a naturalized citizen. Between August 15 and December 3, 1893 he collected $4,000. In the midst of this building fund drive trouble developed between the mining company, Calumet & Hecla and the Italian workers. According to Antoine Rezek, church historian, Italian and Yugoslav miners participated in a strike at Whiting shaft. They walked out after requesting that they be given Sundays and certain holydays off. This was triggered after ten miners were killed while working on a Sunday. In retaliation the mining company refused to give the congregation the necessary land for the proposed church. Father Molinari was removed and sent to Eagle Harbor, the project dropped and the money returned to the donors.

On July 20, 1895 Father Anthony Petillo was sent to Calumet as acting pastor of St. Joseph’s Church which was the national church of the Slovenians but was also used by the Italians. He unsuccessfully tried to revive the project but was transferred to Galveston, Texas on April 19, 1896. However he became much attached to Calumet and hoped that he could return once the Italian church was constructed.

The dream of having their own church did not die. By the summer of 1896 better relations had developed between the Italians and
Calumet & Hecla. At this time the company donated the usual cash support of $2,000 and two lots on Portland Street and construction began immediately. By early September the side walls were up and the building began to assume its basic shape. In order to raise money for the church and its furnishings numerous socials were held. One held in November 1896 was a tremendous success and included singing, supper, and the distribution of prizes.

Construction on St. Mary's Church was drawing to a conclusion by the summer of 1897. On August 15 - the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary - the first Mass was said in the structure. The pews had arrived a week earlier, but other pieces of interior furniture had not. The altar had been ordered through a Chicago firm which had promised it in two months. Furthermore by this time the Italians had begun to organize various church societies. In June the Ladies’ Aid Society was functioning and on June 22 added five new members. It was felt that once the church was completed these organizations would expand.

Father Molinari who had been stationed in Ironwood was now appointed the new pastor of the church. The Copper Country Evening News noted: "The reverend gentleman is a hard working pastor, and the congregation consider themselves fortunate in having secured him."

As the furnishings arrived, a series of dedication ceremonies were put into place. On Sunday, October 10 the church bell was dedicated. The Red Jacket Band led the parishioners and the Italian Benevolent Society marched from its headquarters at Italian Hall. The bell was blessed and dedicated to St. Barbara, the patron saint of miners in what a local newspaper described as an "interesting program."

On the following Sunday, October 17, the main dedication took place. The Evening News wrote that "the ceremony will be one long to be remembered in the history of the colony." Bishop Vertin arrived from Marquette and on Sunday morning a "monster parade" was organized. The majority of the Catholic societies in Calumet turned out for the occasion. The line of march included the following groups: Red Jacket Band; Company B of the Hibernian Rifles; Polish Hussars in their striking military uniforms; the Ancient Order of Hibernians; St. Jean Baptiste Society; St. Stanislaw Koski Society; Laurium Band; the Garibaldi Society; the San Martino Society; the Christopher Columbus Society; along with prominent Italians and the local clergy riding in carriages. Some two thousand people attended the colorful ceremonies. Bishop Vertin was assisted by Fathers Molinari, Morline Marcie, Peter, Pachich, Otto, Letellier, and Nosbich. After a High Mass, the cornerstone was blessed and put into place after which the church was consecrated.

Father Molinari lived up to his reputation as a hard working pastor. The church was soon debt free. By 1906 the congregation consisted of approximately 350 Italian families who actively participated in the worship and affairs of the parish.

In the years which followed life was tranquil among the Italian parishioners. On October 1915 there were two developments of note. Father Manzini, the pastor, had been recently called up for active duty in the Italian army. All of a sudden World War I came directly into the community. However before an action could be taken, the Italian government declared that Italian missionaries and clergymen living and working in foreign countries were immune from the order. At the same time the interior of the church was completely redecorated. The ceiling was painted white, green, and gold and the background of the altar along with the chapels were painted blue. The pews were revarnished, the choir loft along with the ante-rooms were thoroughly renovated. For many years Vincent Grindatti directed an unsurpassed choir of some thirty Italian voices. Mary Coppo was the organist for over fifty years.

The church continued to serve the Italian-American parish until June 1966. At that time due to a declining population, the Bishop of the Diocese of Marquette decided to consolidate a number of Catholic churches in Calumet. Their doors were closed and the parishioners were absorbed into new St. Paul's Church. Actually only the name was changed. This was the former imposing structure, St. Joseph's 'Austrian' or Slovenian church. The records from St. Mary's were transferred to St. Paul's. The structure was then sold to the Locatelli family who use it as a storage facility.
The first Italians settled in Houghton County on Quincy Hill in 1859. They were the Coppo family and Bart Quello and they were soon followed by additional Italians who were drawn to the area by the jobs and general prosperity and opportunity afforded by the copper mines. By 1875 there were many Italians living in Red Jacket (Calumet) and thirty-four of them met and formed the Italian Mutual Beneficial Society. Some of the pioneer members included: James Lisa, Vitale Coppo, Bart Quello, and Giachino Bandoni. The society was established "for the purpose of assisting the members and their countrymen in every way, possible."

The Society was an immediate success. In the fall of 1881 members joined other ethnic groups in the community and marched in a parade for assassinated President James Garfield. The early success of the society was not sustained. In 1884 it ran into a financial crisis when a number of members died and the treasury was suddenly depleted. However new members joined and in 1889 they had a successful year. On June 1 the members celebrated "Constitution Day" with the Calumet Coronet Band providing the music for the parade in the day and for a ball in the evening. On the 4th of July the Italian Benevolent Society along with other ethnic lodges like the Polish Hussars, St. Jean Baptiste Society, Polish Society, and the Finnish Temperance Society, marched through Calumet to the music of the Finnish Coronet Band. Later in the summer the society held a reunion and marched to Section 16 for a picnic with music provided by the coronet band.

As the membership grew and the society prospered it was decided to construct a hall. The society purchased a lot on Third Street in Calumet from the Foley Estate for $1600. Their plan was to erect
a hall, lodge and rooms, and for this purpose they formed a company and issued five hundred shares of stock at $10 each. According to their plan no benefits would be realized during the first year and the rest of the money from the rents would be used to buy up the shares. It was hoped that in a short period of time all of the shares would be purchased by the lodge and it would own the hall. All went according to plan and construction was begun on the hall. However in November as the hall was nearing completion a wind storm blew it down.

The lodge was not about to give up. The Italian Mutual Beneficial Society was incorporated according to the laws of the State of Michigan on December 4, 1889. The members who signed the incorporation papers included: Antonio Marchetti, Bernard Lancina, Vitale Coppo, Marco Curto, Bernard Bracco, Giuseppe Gamitro, Leone Pasquinelli, Peter Pinnoci, James Lisa, and Francesco Baggioni. On February 10, 1890 the members purchased Lot 9, Block 31 on Seventh Street in the village of Calumet from Catherine Foley for $1600. In the mid-1890s the Society had Joseph Wilmus, a contractor, erected a huge wooden structure on the site. The ground floor consisted of store space which was rented out. In 1907 Tony Julio had a liquor store on the south side of the hall and on the north side the space was rented to the Croatian Printing Company. The second floor consisted of a kitchen and dining room and the lodge rooms. The third or top floor of the hall was used as a popular dance hall.

Over the years the Italian Hall was popular with residents of Calumet. Then a fiery disaster struck. On the evening of January 1, 1908 St. Joseph's Austrian (Slovenian) Society rented the hall to celebrate its 25th anniversary. Some time after the celebrants left an accidental fire broke out and quickly consumed the wooden structure because of lack of water due to frozen water hydrants. The structure valued at $27,000 was a total loss. It was insured with the Italian Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Laurium for only $14,000. The society was shocked by the disaster. At first it was hoped that the other Italian societies would join in with them to construct a new brick building, but most of them were reluctant.

Now there was a new turn of events. Approximately 150 Italians met in Hancock in mid-February, 1908 to discuss plans for constructing a hall of their own. The leaders of this movement were: Leonard Meola, Amerigo Centoria, and M. Colombo, all of Hancock. The local Italians were interested in subscribing $50,000 for the hall which was planned to be erected on Quincy Street in Hancock. The first floor would consist of storage space, the second floor office, and the third floor would be the location of the lodge rooms. The promoters of this idea felt that since the Calumet Italian Hall had been destroyed, it
was time to act, as the Italians of the Copper Country did not have a hall large enough to meet their demands. If built, Italian organizations from throughout the region could use the building.

At the same time the members of the Italian Mutual Beneficial Society were holding their own meetings. In late February they decided to rebuild a new hall on the same site without the other Italian societies joining in. By March 7 they had the necessary plans for the construction of the building to begin in the summer. The architect for the new building was Paul Humphrey MacNeil. On April 1 the bids were opened and this continued until April 10. The general contractor was P.J. Donohue; carpentry subcontractor, Charles A. Anderson; plumbing contractor, Peninsula Heating and Plumbing Company; heating contractor, William Boone; plastering contractor, Fred Roehm; and electrical contractor, Hosking and McClure. The structure which would eventually measure 58 x 110 feet and rise to the height of two stories was rushed to completion.

By October the new Italian Hall, the third of the series was reaching the final stages of completion. The first floor consisted of a saloon and store in the front with a seven room apartment in the rear of each with separate entrances. The basement was divided for use by the establishments upstairs. All of the woodwork throughout the structure was composed of Georgia pine which had a hard oil finish except in the saloon which was painted to match the fixtures. The second floor was "reached by going up a wide and easy stairway from the front." The auditorium had a stage, refreshment room, dining room, understage, coat room, ticket and property rooms. It measured 40 x 71 feet with eighteen foot high ceilings and was finished in Georgia pine, maple flooring and highly ornamented steel ceiling. The stage measuring 25 feet deep and 40 feet wide had a 13 foot ceiling and a proscenium arch (11 x 22 feet). The ladies and men's dressing rooms were located on the sides of the stage. The balcony was ten feet wide by sixty feet long, well trimmed with a neat balustrade and ornamental columns. Under the stage there was a dining room (25 x 40 feet) reached by two stairways from the auditorium and the refreshment room. All of the floors were cushioned against noise. Citing the safety of the building the reporter wrote:

Particular attention has been paid to the safety of the public in the design of this building and in addition to the ample main stairway a large iron fire escape has been erected on the side of the building and also one from the stage, both of these are built into the solid brick walls, all doors open outwards.

The building was illuminated with both electric and gas lighting and heat was provided by a large steam plant.

The grand dedication took place on Saturday, October 10, 1908. In the morning a parade composed of all of the Italian lodges in Calumet and Laurium (Italian Benevolent Society, Garibaldi Celibri Society, Giuseppe Garibaldi Society, Ettore Perrone Society, Giuseppe Giusti Society) and the C&H and Red Jacket City Bands formed with over 1000 men in the line of march and headed for the hall. A luncheon dinner catered by Dominic Borgo was held at noon. Dignitaries included civic officials from Calumet, Laurium, South Range and Mohawk and those from Calumet & Hecla Mining Company. Important Italians attending the dedication included: Attilio Castiglione, John B. Rastello, James Lisa, the Italian vice consul, Dominic Centanino and Leone Pasquinielle, one of the oldest members of the lodge. Most of these men gave speeches once the meal was finished. The prevailing tone of the speeches was that the Italian residents of Houghton County made good citizens. John Rastello spoke in English and gave a brief history of the society. Castiglione spoke in Italian also highlighting the development of the lodge. He pointed out that it was the premier society in the district and the largest Italian organization in Michigan. The general manager of C&H Mining Company, James MacNaughton praised the Italians and their heritage. After making the necessary connection with Columbus he stated: "This hall stands as a monument to the intelligence, the thrift, and the good citizenship of the Italian population of Calumet...." He concluded with praise for the Italian worker: "I found them first of all good workmen, they were honest law abiding citizens, but the best indication of their workmanship and citizenship was their unfailing loyalty to their employer."

It has united Italian residents of Calumet and vicinity in fraternal bonds; it has extended aid to its members in time of need; and has never let an opportunity pass to strengthen the principles of Americanism which already strongly exist among those affiliated with it - for every man connected with the society is in America to stay and is desirous of becoming everything that a citizen should be. The hall is a great credit to it and will stand as a monument to its intelligence, courage, enterprise....

The Italian Hall as it became known was a popular hall used by the community at large and was also the focal point for the Italian community. It was the meeting place for many of the Italian lodges in Calumet. On Columbus Day the annual parades usually started.
and ended at the hall where the meal and dancing were held. This tradition went back for many years. On July 10-11, 1909 the hall was the scene of a celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the conquest of Lombardy by the Italians over the Austrians. On that occasion hundreds of Italians from throughout the iron and copper countries were in attendance. Also in 1909 leaders of the Italian Mutual Beneficial Society were involved in creating the Italo-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula. This organization was composed of Italian societies from throughout the Peninsula with the aim of uniting them and promoting American citizenship. Over the years the annual conventions of the Federation were held in the hall. The Italian Dramatic Society which flourished around 1910 and after also used the hall for their plays and musical entertainment.

Although the scene of many happy occasions, the Italian Hall is unfortunately best known for the "Italian Hall Disaster." During the bitter copper strike of 1913-1914, the miners' children were entertained at a Christmas party held on December 24, 1913 in the hall. Some 400 children and adults attended the festivities. Then suddenly panic struck the hall and people surged toward the main exit. Later eyewitnesses stated that a man yelled "fire" and caused the pandemonium. The truth will never be known. The tragedy was in the stairway. The first children fell on the stairs and others piled upon them causing a great mass of suffocating and crushed bodies. The result was the death of 73, primarily children, on that Christmas Eve and an additional child who died the next day of injuries suffered in the crush. Fifty-nine of the victims were children, their ages ranging from 2 to 16 years. The "Italian Hall Tragedy" continues to be remembered by the residents of Calumet.

The Italian Mutual Beneficial Society continued until 1922. At that time due to the end of immigration and the poor economic conditions in the Copper Country, it was decided to merge all of the existing Italian societies into one: the Christopher Columbus Society. In 1928 the Italian Benevolent Society Building Association signed a warranty deed to the Columbia Hall Association. After that time the hall was sold to a number of individuals beginning in 1943. It continued to be used by the community well into the 1960s. The Fraternal Order of Eagles owned the hall for many years. By the 1970s the hall had fallen onto hard times. It was owned by private individuals and gradually no longer used for social functions. The paint peeled, windows were broken, and cornices fell off. In the early 1980s a group of concerned citizens formed to save the hall but they were unsuccessful in their efforts. In the fall of 1985 the Italian Hall, a familiar landmark and a reminder of the terrible tragedy, was demolished. Today all that remains is a pile of rubble.

Chapter 7
ITALIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The history and development of most ethnic groups in Upper Michigan is poorly known. This was certainly true of the Italians, for whom there has been a scarcity of information from the pens of academic scholars. However there is a great abundance of misinformation and stereotypes. Until recently the basic research data from which studies could be carried out was completely unavailable. If the story of the society in general is vague, that of the Italian immigrant women is completely unknown. It is the purpose of this study to place the Italian immigrant woman in clearer perspective and to analyze her role in society.

The first Italians to settle in Upper Michigan as a community rather than as individuals went to Houghton County in 1859, attracted by the available employment in the copper mines. Others followed them into Upper Michigan and found employment in the copper and iron mines, in the lumber and woolen mills, tanneries, on canal and railroad projects and even on farms. This massive influx of people peaked in the years prior to World War I.

The Italians who first arrived did not include Italian women except for one case. In 1870 Bart Quello was married to an Irish woman, Gaitan Coppo to a Canadian, John Adams to a French woman, and Joseph Pantera to a New Yorker. Only John Saladini, who hailed from the Swiss-Italian canton of Ticino, was married to a compatriot, named Mary.

At first the Italian women remained in the Old Country. The men would come to the United States to work for a number of years and then with the money amassed, return to Italy and settle down on a farm with their families. While their husbands were away the women usually remained with relatives, worked on farms or in a variety of
factory jobs. They had no idea that within a few years they would be leaving family and home to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

For a variety of reasons and especially because the mining companies encouraged the development of a family-based society for a more stable work force, the men decided to remain in the United States. Housing was readily available to the miner and his family for a nominal rental fee. So within two to five years after their arrival in Upper Michigan, the Italians had saved enough money to either be reunited with their families or marry.

If the Italian male was already married he might follow one or more of the following procedures. Some men returned to the Old Country on a regular basis for short visits with their wives and families before they brought over their growing families. Others might return to Italy and bring their wives back on the first trip. Still others might send for their wives and have them make the long trip in the company of friends or relatives.

Bachelors had a number of options open to them. They might return to the Old Country and marry a woman that they had left behind. Some of the local Italian women, especially keepers of boarding houses, acted as matchmakers. Angelina "Grandma" Terzaghi in Negaunee was one of these women. She would check over her boarders, who were all from the same village in Italy and in some cases related. When one fellow looked like a good match for a niece or sister, Grandma Terzaghi would act as the go-between. Letters would be exchanged and within a matter of weeks the prospective bride would be in Negaunee staying with relatives and getting to know her future husband for the first time. The courtship was usually extremely short and marriage came within a matter of weeks. If the man was not interested, other boarders were. Under these circumstances the women had no say as to who they married or where they would live. Other bachelors were married to women in the Old Country by proxy, the marriage being arranged by the two families. The family bond was strong among Italians and they would decide who a woman might marry.

The women, both married and unmarried, who came to the United States were in for a cultural shock. The remoteness of the district and the harsh winter climate came as a surprise for most women. Anne Alfonso of Sault Ste. Marie tells a story of the typical feelings of many Italian women who ventured in Upper Michigan:

She [mother] got on a train in New York City and she said that it went on and on and on for 'I don't know how many days.' The countryside was lush when she started the journey with fields and orchards in September. They kept going where there was

Many women arriving in the winter or early spring were shocked by what they found. Italy has a mild climate, especially in the non-Alpine areas. One woman traveling to the Copper Country in early May was surprised by what she saw. As she peered out of the train window she thought it was odd that American farmers put so much lime on their fields. She quickly recognized her mistake when the "white stuff" continued beyond the fields into the woods of northern Wisconsin. Filomina Giorgetti arrived at the Houghton railroad station during the winter of 1919 and was quite surprised when her cousin told her that they were walking on the frozen surface of Portage Lake as they took a regular winter short-cut to Hancock.

The absence of stone houses concerned many of the women, who at first thought it odd that so many Americans lived in barns. In Italy where lumber was scarce, substantial houses were constructed of stone. Other women were concerned about the lack of conveniences. Josephine D'Angelo, who went from central Italy to Gwinn, was distressed by the fact that there was no electricity, indoor running water or cobblestone streets in her adopted community. In many cases these women were at first very unhappy and cried for many months, wishing they were back in Italy amid familiar surroundings and their families and friends. However they finally resigned themselves to their new environment and lives.

In traditional Italian society the woman's role was in the home raising a family. This tradition was maintained in Upper Michigan. However not only did the women have to maintain their homes but they had an additional chore—caring for boarders. Since housing was at a premium, the mining companies encouraged the Italians to take in boarders. Usually these men were single, relatives or from the same town in the Old Country. By taking in boarders the family could significantly augment its earnings. A survey of a number of select communities shows an interesting trend. In Red Jacket/Calumet, which by 1900 had an older and more middle class society, only 25% of Italian households kept boarders. However, in more recently established communities the percentage ran higher. At Mansfield Township in Iron County, and at Bessemer, Gogebic County, it was 45%, while at Sault Ste. Marie it was 59% and up to 65% in Negaunee and Marquette County. In these communities the number of boarders per household
averaged 6.7 individuals.

Taking care of boarders was the major occupation of the Italian women immigrants in Upper Michigan. The work was hard and unceasing. Charles Valesano of Wakefield, the son of a hardworking mother, could say in later years: "The men probably had a hard time working in the mines, under the conditions that they had, with the language barrier and so on, but...the women had the hardest time.” The women in charge of the household needed skill, foresight, stamina and determination. Besides caring for the house, these women had to feed the household and wash the heavy mining clothes of the boarders. Aided by their husbands, the women usually managed large vegetable gardens located in their yards or the immediate vicinity. In the late summer and early fall they canned hundreds of quarts of vegetables and fruits. Gathering wild fruits and berries accompanied by their children and friends usually turned into a social event. Jams and jellies were made from the products of their expeditions into the woods. Potatoes and other root crops were harvested and placed in the cellar. Many women kept chickens and cows. Some women supplemented their income by selling surplus eggs, milk, cheese and butter.

For some of the women the experience was more difficult than others because of their age and the large number of boarders they maintained. A good example of this was Maria Bartoma, who was 23 years of age, had been in the United States for one year and was married as long. Besides the adjustment to the new country, Maria had a two month old child to care for, along with two dozen boarders. Teresa Peutrillala of Crystal Falls had to maintain a household comprising her iron miner husband, seven children and 13 boarders. At Franklin Mine, Nerce Ciabitari, whose husband Angelo was a rockhouse man had six children and in addition took care of a brother, sister-in-law, and 11 boarders, for a total of 21 in her household.

It was not common for immigrant women to work outside the home in Upper Michigan because there were few non-mining related industries to employ them. Young single women who arrived without a knowledge of English usually found employment with Italian families as domestics until they were married, which was usually soon. Others, both married and single, who had been dressmakers and seamstresses in Italy continued their trade, operating out of their homes. During the 1920s there were two small garment factories in the Yellow Jacket and Newton districts of Calumet that during their brief existences employed immigrant women. At Sault Ste. Marie, which was more industrialized than any other community in Upper Michigan, a few immigrant women sought employment in the local woolen mill and
tannery. At Hermansville some women obtained temporary employment in the fox pelt plant, cleaned smelt, tended fox and mink ranches or worked in the bean cannery.

Some women took the initiative and developed their own businesses, but this was rare. In 1900 in Red Jacket/Calumet, Margaret Gardeto and her daughter Mary were grocers. Margaret's husband was a day laborer and does not seem to have been connected with the business. Mrs. Messano operated a candy store in Wakefield. Sofia Baidrica and Carmela Carocci, both in their 30s, operated their own beauty salons in Iron Mountain. Leza Formento, also of Iron Mountain, owned and operated a candy store to supplement the income of her husband's barbershop. Annie Menghini of Norway Township was one of the very few women listed as a "farm laborer" in 1900.

It was much more common for women to work along with their husbands in a family business. When death overtook the husband the woman played an active role as proprietress of the business. In Mackinac County, Amelia Romano became a widow prior to 1910 and was left with eight children ranging in age from one through 18, in 1909. She continued to operate the family farm. This was also true of Annie Sauro, who managed her farm with the aid of her 17 year old son. Filomena Giorgetti of Hancock was married to Freddie Lavorini, who operated the Lavorini Macaroni Factory. After his death Filomina was left with two small daughters to raise and the factory to run. She found the factory too costly to operate so she sold the equipment and developed a food delivery service that specialized in pasta. The pasta, or macaroni as it was called, was purchased in bulk from a Chicago supplier and shipped by rail to Hancock. Filomena repackaged it and used a truck to deliver pasta and eventually other Italian products such as cheese, olive oil, rice and dried fish from Trimountain on the south to Mohawk on the north in the Copper Country. She delivered from door to door and also sold to groceries and restaurants. During the summer she raised tomatoes and added them to her line of products.

Catherine Marta of Laurium was widowed in 1909 and left with a successful bakery business heavily mortgaged. Between that time and the 1930s, she was the owner of the bakery and managed it while her sons worked for her. Even after she sold the bakery to her son Jack, she continued to play an active and dominant role in the operation of the bakery. One local resident recalled, "She was the boss...." In 1947 she was honored by the American Baker's Association in Chicago as the oldest active baker in the United States. When she died in 1960 her estate was valued at $100,000.

Antonia "Nina" Benetti of Gogebic County followed a different but common path after the death of her husband. She had always been a hard working woman who loved the out-of-doors. Prior to her husband's death in 1937, she had kept farm animals and a large garden. Now she was the sole support for eight children ranging in age from 18 down to six. She met the crisis with vigor typical of the immigrant women. She rented a large field where she raised potatoes and hay for sale. The milk and cheese she got and processed from her two cows was sold to regular customers. Neighbors dropped by and purchased eggs as needed. With this dairy and egg business she was able to provide her family with cash. Most of their needs were met. Two pigs raised each year were processed into sausage and salame. Her large garden provided the family with hundreds of quarts of canned vegetables, while jams and jellies were made from berries gathered by the children. Meat was also canned. With a great deal of hard work Antonia Benetti raised and educated all of her children and saw them go on to promising careers.

A common business activity for most widows was taking in laundry and hiring out as domestics. Augusta Rizzardi of Iron Mountain even advertised in the local newspaper that she took in laundry. Some women also augmented their incomes by operating stills that produced a potent liquor called grappa, which was then sold.

The Italian women found opposition from their husbands when they tried to organize lodges or benevolent societies, as the men had so successfully done in the past. This male hostility was due to their thinking that the woman's place was in the home and not out attending meetings and socials. The women who organized, joined and participated in such organizations were going against the ideas of the period.

But the women eventually prevailed. Despite those attitudes, Italian women in Upper Michigan united and organized a number of successful societies. One of the earliest was the Ladies' Aid Society connected with St. Mary's Catholic Church in Calumet. By 1897, when the church structure was completed, the society was flourishing. On April 15, 1915, the Italian Women's Club of Iron Mountain was organized with 25 charter members. In January, 1917, the Daughters of the Eternal City in Calumet were organized with 20 charter members. One stormy night in February, 1919, despite the elements and male opposition, the small group of women from South Range-Trimountain-Painesdale in Houghton County joined together to form the Daughters of Italy. In Bessemer the women established the Maria Pia Society, named after a princess of the Italian royal family. In Negaunee on January 17, 1925, Italian women formed the Lady Druids with 27 charter members. There were also Druid lodges in Bessemer and...
Wakefield. During the 1930s two additional women's societies were formed: the Christopher Columbus Women's Auxiliary (May 8, 1932) and the Italian Beneficial Society of Iron River (July 9, 1935). As a result of this activity by the end of the 1930s there was at least one women's society in each of the major centers of Italian population throughout Upper Michigan.

The main reason for forming these societies was to unify the Italian women. For a small fee ranging from 10 cents to 50 cents per month, members could receive sick, accident and death benefits. For instance, the Daughters of Italy provided sick benefits at the rate of 50 cents per day to a maximum of $50. A recurring illness was not covered. The death benefit was $100, with an additional $10 for flowers and Masses to be said for the individual's soul. If found to be drunk or disorderly, members forfeited their benefits. This last prohibition shows some of the influence carried over from the by-laws of the local Sons of Italy.

Besides the benefits of the society there were the social aspects. These societies provided the women an outlet where they could meet, talk, and play cards. Dances and more elaborate masquerades were popular and attended by the men. All-female picnics and dinners were held throughout the year.

These societies also reached out to the wider community. The women donated money for the poor, unemployed, and earthquake victims in Italy. Other societies directed blood drives and donated money to local hospitals.

A brief study of one of these societies will illustrate their past and present role in the lives of Italian and Italian-American women. The Christopher Columbus Women’s Auxiliary was established in 1932 with 71 charter members in Sault Ste. Marie. It was eventually incorporated under Michigan law four years later with its objectives: 1. To promote and encourage social activities among members of both societies and 2. To unite and help members in case of need and distress. Dues were and continue to be 50 cents per month. Today there is a standard sick benefit of $5 and a small death benefit of $150.

The society had also been formed to help the men pay off their society’s building. Although the men’s society owned the hall, the women developed a unique agreement over the use of the hall. There was no question of male ownership of the hall, but the women retained absolute control over the kitchen. This was critical because in the past it was through dinners that they raised funds. There were always big dinners for mother’s and father’s day and the hall was used by members and non-members for banquets, anniversaries, weddings, and other celebrations. For the women who volunteered their time these dinners became a big business for their society. In subsequent years as the society became wealthier and the kitchen organization more professional, they hired a special manager and staff. The poor local economy of the early 1980s caused a decline in the once popular dinners.

Besides meeting and socializing, the women used their money for a variety of social programs. Money was donated to Bay Cliff camp for handicapped children in Marquette. The lodge worked on local blood drives, providing free space, coffee and doughnuts. Money was sent for the relief of Italian earthquake victims. Since 1974 the society has provided a $300 scholarship to a member or one of a member’s children attending Lake Superior State College. Besides this society the other women’s societies which continue to be active in Upper Michigan are: Lady Druids of Negaunee, and the Daughters of Italy in South Range. Women are also very active in the Paìsano Clubs of the Upper Peninsula.

A small number of Italian women provided the immigrant community with important medical services. Midwives were common in Italy and most immigrant communities had their midwives. In the Copper Country one of the more prominent and famous midwives was Martha Lisa. She was a kind and gentle woman who would quickly respond to the call to "Martha." The fact that Mrs. Lisa spoke Italian was comforting to the young Italian mothers. Later she would assist appreciative physicians with deliveries.

Other women specialized in healing sprained muscles and broken bones and providing folk remedies. Maria Rastello, known as "La Madonna," was a widow of 67 in 1900, living with her son’s family, in Calumet. People remember her as having a special gift—she would place her hand over a broken bone or sprained muscle and people swore that it quickly healed for them. Other women were skilled in folk medicine, which they brought with them to Michigan. Some folk practices like washing new-born babies in wine to give the child strength were discontinued in the United States, but other practices flourished. Many women brought special herbs and plants from Italy and cultivated them in their gardens. Chamomile was one of these herbs; its yellow flowers were used to brew a tea taken for upset stomachs. Wormwood was another herb that had many uses. The common cold was dealt with in a number of ways: garlic was worn around the neck and both children and adults would take a drink made of boiled wine and apples or milk and whiskey. Other women might treat a bladder infection with a mixture of beer and castor oil. Severe headaches or depression in both humans and animals might be attributed to the "evil eye" or a spell cast upon an individual. In order to remedy such a
problem some women had the power to say special prayers and anoint a person with oil and bring about a cure. This power could be passed on to other females, usually daughters, eight days before Christmas.

The Italian immigrant women were an important force within the family and the community in Upper Michigan. Unfortunately, because they did not play a public role, they have been largely ignored. They proved to be a match for the harsh environment in which they settled. They were strong, hard working individuals who overcame problems and adjusted to the new land.

Chapter 8
THE ITALIAN LITERARY AND CULTURAL TRADITION*

Italians began to arrive in the Great Lakes Country as early as the 17th century. Those who were the vanguard of 19th century immigration patterns first went to the Copper Country in the 1850s. Between 1890 and World War I, thousands of Italians arrived in Upper Michigan, attracted by the opportunities offered by the booming economies of Chippewa, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Marquette, Mackinaw and Menominee counties. Most of these immigrants were miners and laborers, but many became successful businessmen as well. Whatever their occupations, the Italians brought with them a strong sense and appreciation for literature and culture.

The Italian literary tradition in the Great Lakes region can be traced to the 17th century. Francesco Giuseppe Bressani, Si. (1624-1672), was the only non-French member of the Society of Jesus to work as a missionary among the Huron Indians in New France. Born in Rome, Bressani was ordained a priest and began his missionary work in Canada in 1642. He returned to Europe and wrote A Brief Account of Certain Missions of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in New France (Breve Relatione degli Alcuni Missioni del P.P. della Compagnia di Cesa nella Nuova Francia) which was published in 1653. It forms a part of the famous Jesuit Relations. It was a typical chronicle account of the period but unique because it tells the missionary story through the eyes of an Italian instead of a Frenchman.

The next Italian to write about his experiences in the western Great Lakes country was Giacomo Constantino Beltrami (1779-1855), who visited northern Minnesota in the early nineteenth century. Beltrami

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was born in Bergamo, province of Lombardy in northern Italy. He held a number of government positions as chancellor and judge until 1821, when he was accused of plotting to create a republic and was exiled. Having been fascinated with the Mississippi River since he was a youth, he came to the United States and traveled to the Minnesota frontier. In August, 1823, he visited numerous lakes, including Lake Julia, and left convinced that he had discovered the source of the Mississippi River. The winter of 1824 was spent in New Orleans where he wrote and published his narrative in French bearing the English title *The Discovery of the Sources of Mississippi and of the Bloody River*. In 1828 he published his most celebrated work, *A Pilgrimage in Europe and America*. This two volume work was constructed as a series of letters addressed to an Italian countess, detailing his trip to Minnesota and his exploration of the source of the Mississippi.

The Italians who went to Upper Michigan during (and even before) the boom years of 1890-1914 brought with them a well-established literary tradition. A high percentage of the Italian immigrants could read and write in their own language. A survey taken by the Dillingham Immigration Commission showed that of the 537 northern Italians interviewed, 507 could read and 506 could also write in their native tongues, that is 94% of the total.

During this period most Italian-language books and newspapers were imported into the region from New York City distributors. Many individuals developed their own private libraries. Unfortunately, most of these libraries were dispersed at the deaths of the owners. John Patritto of Ironwood, Michigan, was one of these immigrants who created his own library; the few books that remain provide a tantalizing view of his reading interests. One is a work dealing with Christian moral law by the Jesuit, Paolo Segneri, entitled *11 Christiano Istruito nella sua Legge Ragionamenti Morali* (Vol. 1, Milano: Borroni E. Acotti, 1854). Another deals with the creation of the world and natural history entitled *11 Mondo Prima della Creazione dell'Uomo di Camillo Flammarion*. Then there is Carolina Invernizio's *Santanella*, which is a romantic social story published in 1908. The last surviving volume deals with the disastrous earthquake which struck Sicily and the adjacent coast of Calabria on December 28, 1908, destroying the city of Messina and killing over 85,000 people. It was written by J. Martin Miller and translated into Italian by Alfredo D'Agnillo.

Due to the high cost of Italian-language books, most immigrants relied on those local libraries that carried foreign-language books. In 1910 a group in Hurley, Wisconsin, formed the Italian Library Club, its sole purpose to develop an Italian-language collection. In the
Copper Country, the mining companies constructed libraries at Calumet and Painesdale and purchased foreign-language books. The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company provided the financial resources for a library which quickly became a show place, fully staffed and stocked with some 6,000 books by 1898. By 1903 this number had grown to 18,542 volumes and by 1931 there were some 52,000 books and magazines on its shelves.

Hundreds of Italian-language books were purchased over the years. The works most in demand were romantic novels. Such titles as *Fioredi Passione* (Flower of Passion) by the popular author Matilde Serao and Gerolamo Rovetta's *Il Tenente de Lancieri* (The Lieutenant of the Lancers) were favorites. The famed Italian poet-nationalist Gabriele D'Annunzio’s works were widely read as was the monumental two-volume documentary, *La Guerra Russo-Giapponese* (The Russo-Japanese War). American titles in translation which were popular included *La Capanna dello Zio Tom* (Uncle Tom's Cabin), Bret Harte’s *Racconti Californidni* (California Tales), Theodore Roosevelt’s *Vigor di Vita* (The Strenuous Life), Guglielmo Shakespeare’s *Il Sogno di una Notte de Mezza Estate* (A Midsummer Night's Dream). Besides the books, the libraries subscribed to Italian language magazines like *L’Iustrazione Italiana* and to newspapers published locally and in New York. These volumes, which eventually numbered several thousand, were widely dispersed when the Calumet Library was closed in the early 1940s.

The Italian communities in the western Upper Peninsula developed their own Italian-language newspapers. *Il Minatore Italian* (The Italian Miner), *La Sentinella* (The Sentinel), *La Democrazione Italiana*, (The Italian Democrat), *La Nostra Terra* (Our Land), *L'Indipendente* (The Independent), and *Il Difensore dei Cittadini* (Citizens’ Defender). They provided the immigrants with much needed news on the local, state, national and international levels and with important links to the American community.

They also assisted the immigrants in the Americanization process. The most famous and longest-lasting of these newspapers was *Il Minatore Italian* which was established in 1896 by August C. Marinelli (1871-1932). Many locally prominent Italians like Vincent Vairo, Leone Pasquinello and John B. Rastello promoted the paper and in 1912 formed the Miner Publishing Company. The paper was published in the Tinette building located on Osceola Street in Laurium's "Little Italy." The October 13, 1908, issue is interesting and larger, for it featured the dedication of the Italian Hall. In the same issue there was a page in English for the non-Italian readers with instructions to vote the Republican ticket in the coming election. During the copper strike of
1913-14 the newspaper took a pro-company stand. Consequently, the paper and its publisher came under constant fire from Ben Goggins who, writing in Italian, challenged *Il Minatore Italiano*'s statements and news concerning the strike in the locally produced *Miner's Bulletin*, published by the Western Federation of Miners. *Il Minatore* continued as a daily into 1919, by 1928 became a tri-weekly and eventually ceased publication in the 1930's.

Besides the newspaper, the Miner Publishing Company was a printing firm, producing invitations, stationery, and in 1912, a valuable Italian-language *Guida degli Italiani de Copper Country*, which listed all of the Italians living in the region.

The other Italian-language newspaper in the Copper Country was *La Sentinella*, established in 1895. In 1903 the paper was published from a print shop operated by John Lisa. By 1906 Teofilo Petriella, a scholarly socialist with college training, was the editor. The one surviving issue (February 6, 1906) is filled with socialist philosophy and rhetoric. Surprisingly many Italian businessmen advertised in the paper. Petriella soon left the area and by 1907 was associated with the Western Federation of Miners as the Italian strike leader on the Mesabi and Vermillion Ranges in northern Minnesota, after which he moved to Butte, Montana. From the sketchy evidence available it would seem that his newspaper had ceased publication at the time of his departure.

In Hurley, Wisconsin, Frank Marta established *La Nostra Terra*. The first issue was published on January 23, 1904, and it continued as an Italian-language publication until September 27, 1913. It changed hands a number of times and finally was sold to Fritz Emunson, who renamed it the *Iron Country News* and began publishing it in English.

A little-known newspaper, *L'Indipendente*, was founded in the autumn of 1917 in Hancock at 107 Quincy Street. The editor was A. Prati and the corresponding agent was E. Pupilli. Advertisements were for both Italian and American businesses, banks stressing that they had Italian-speaking agents and thus could provide excellent service to the immigrants. Unfortunately it is not known how long this newspaper remained in existence.

Besides these local newspapers, Italian-language newspapers from New York and elsewhere were also popular. In 1894, John Daprato, an Iron Mountain businessman and politician, promoted *LaRaldo Italiano* (Italian Herald). Representatives of *Il Progresso halo-American* visited various Upper Michigan communities in 1896 promoting their newspaper. In 1910 *Il Giornale Italiano* was promoted and subscribed to by some Italians.

The Italian language, and in particular the various regional dialects, was commonly spoken among the immigrants; while the men and
school children learned English at work and school, women kept the language alive among their friends and with Italian-speaking shopkeepers. Italian was usually spoken in the home. However, some men forbade the use of their native language in the home and conscientiously promoted English. Today, the descendants speak a variety of dialects but in most cases do not know Toscano, the official Italian dialect.

Italians sent their children to the local public schools and usually did not establish special Italian-language or parochial schools. In June, 1910, however, there was an attempt to develop an Italian-language summer school in Calumet-Laurium, headed by Reverend Aneceto Sinvioni of St. Mary's Church, assisted by the Sisters of Notre Dame who staffed the Sacred Heart School in Laurium. The Italian consul, James Lisa, obtained free Italian-language books from the Italian government. During the summer months classes were held three times a week and 150 students attended the first session.

For adults there were various programs promoting citizenship and assimilation into American society. Lodges and citizens' leagues were formed, such as an Italian Education Club in Calumet, founded in 1909 and holding its meetings in Italian Hall.

Dramatic and musical talent was strong within the Italian community. In the Vulcan-Norway area of Dickinson County, the Tyrolean Italians organized mixed singing and dramatic groups. In Calumet—with its larger Italian population and Italian Hall—there was the the Italian Hall Dramatic Group. Individual societies also put on special performances. A dramatic group, organized in the 1920s in Negaunee, performed plays in the local high school. Their performances were primarily comedies and farces, short one-act plays such as "The Triumph of the Butcher," "The Amorous Snare," "Wives Desperate for Husbands," and "The Strategy for Paying Debts." Today such performances are held only in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, where a strong effort has been made to preserve the Italian language and culture.

Italian musicians often became music teachers. Immigrants also formed their own bands or joined community bands, providing music for dances, parties and funerals. Italians also joined city and company bands like those in Caspian, Negaunee and Hermansville. Dance orchestras, like Professor Joseph Bangiovanni's String Orchestra at Negaunee, were formed, and with the advent of the radio Italian music filled the air waves.

Italians were also renowned for their singing voices. The Italian Catholic Churches in Calumet and Iron Mountain had excellent choirs that were in great demand for performances. Today this tradition continues with the choir at St. Mary's church in Hurley, Wisconsin.

One of the most famous Italian singers was Attilio Baggione, of the Copper Country. Baggione was born and raised in Hancock and was "discovered" and instructed by Mildred Romsdahl-Bruns. He went to Chicago to work and study, and eventually traveled to Italy, where he continued with his musical training. Baggione mastered five well-known operas and gave performances in London, Rome, and Brussels. Able to sing tenor roles at La Scala Opera House in Milan, he was called the "Second Caruso," receiving praise from Louise Tetrazzini, with whom he sang at Albert Hall in London. When Baggione returned to the Copper Country, he performed before a sell-out audience at the Calumet Opera House.

The Italian immigrants who settled the mining frontier of Upper Michigan did not forget their cultural roots and tradition. Newspapers, magazines, and books were widely read by the populace. Although conditions were difficult and leisure time at a premium, they found time to participate in choral and dramatic groups.
Chapter 9
ITALIAN ORGANIZATIONS 1875-PRESENT

During the heyday of Italian immigration to Upper Michigan and adjacent areas, the immigrants had a need for a variety of organizations. The most common of these societies was that of mutual benefit (*mutua beneficenza*) or mutual aid (*mutuo soccorso*) which was brought with them from the Old Country. Usually they paid 50 cents per month and received $1 per day if they were sick or incapacitated because of an accident. Their family received approximately $100-200 for funeral expenses and the members had to attend the funeral in full regalia with a band or face a fine of $5. Every community with an Italian population had at least one of these organizations while others had many. Membership was limited to Italians, those from particular regions or provinces, or from individual communities. In the 1920s many of these societies were combined and in later years as the immigrant population declined they were disbanded. Besides these societies there were others concerned with drama, literature, politics, business, realty, religion, and hunting. Although the male societies predominated there were societies organized by women. Today each Upper Michigan community with an Italian-American population has a least one such society.

(f.-flourished)

CHIPPEWA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Sault Ste. Marie
1. Christopher Columbus Benefit Society (6-13-1930).
2. Christopher Columbus Society Ladies Auxiliary (5-8-1932).
MINERS, MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES

DICKINSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Iron Mountain

3. Italian Mutual Beneficial Society (12-6-1886).
4. Italian Instructional Club (f. 1894).
5. Societa Capestrano-Abruzzi (5-12-1900), Capistrano-Abruzzi Society.
7. Societa Austriaca Tirolese (7-14-1902), Austrian Tyrol Society.
10. Societa di Mutual Socco"rs Vittorio Emmanuele 111, Bas Italia (8-4-1905), Victor Emmanuel Mutual Aid Society, Lower Italy.
12. Societa Maria S.S. del Monte Carmelo de Mutuo Soccorso (5-2-1910), Mutual Aid Society of Holiest Mary of Mt. Carmel.
13. Subordinate Lodge of the Knights of Romulus No. 5 (f. 1912).
16. Regina Margherita Society (women), (ca. 1917).
17. Regina Elena Society (women), (ca. 1922).

Loretto


Norway

22. Catena della Alpi Societa (7-8-1907), Society of the Chain of Alps.
23. Societa Giuseppe Garibaldi.
24. Loyal Order of the Moose (All-Italian), (1914).

above: Members attending the last meeting of the Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula in September 1982 held in Iron Mountain. (Source: Russell Magnaghi)

top: Officers of the Christopher Columbus Lodge of Iron Mountain (1900) from 1-r Julio Solivanti, John Constantini and Giuseppe Viola. (Source: Unknown)
MINERS, MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES

Vulcan
25. Societa Cacciatori Tirolese (1891), Society of Tyrolese Hunters.
27. Societa di Giuseppe Garibaldi (1902).

GOGEBIC COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Bessemer
29. Societa Unita di Mutuo Soccoi-so (12-1-1891), United Society of Mutual Help.
30. Societa di Mutuo Soccasso Fratelli Bandiera (8-13-1904), Society of Mutual Help, Brothers of the Flag.
31. Societa Andrea Hofer (Tyrolian patriot).
32. Societa Alta Italia (7-7-1909), Society of Upper Italy.
33. Maria Pia Society for Women (ca. 1920).
34. United Ancient Order of Druids (ca. 1920s).
35. The United Italian Realty Association (1925).
36. Italian Mutual Beneficial Society (1933).

Ironwood

Ramsay
40. Lega Cittadina de Mutuo Soccasso (5-18-1915), Citizens’ League of Mutual Aid.

Wakefield
41. Ancient Order of Druids (1920s).

HOUGHTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Calumet
42. Societa Italiana de Mutua Beneficenza (1875), Italian Mutual Beneficial Society; oldest in Upper Michigan.
43. Societa Giuseppe Garibaldi (1895).
44. Guardia Cristoforo Colombo No. 4 (10-5-1895), Christopher Columbus Guard No. 4.
45. Ladies Aid Society of St. Mary’s Italian Church (f. 1897).
46. Societa Toscana Giuseppe Giusti (11-4-1907), Tuscan Society of Giuseppe Giusti.
47. Italian Republic Club (4-1908).
49. Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula (10-23-1909).
50. Societa Ettore Perrone di San Martino Canavese (9-30-1908, reorg.).
51. Societa Bersaglieri Italiani (f. 1909), Society of Italian Riflemen.
52. Italian Dramatic Club (f. 1910).
54. Societa Giuseppe Garibaldi Celebi (f. 1910), Giuseppe Garibaldi Bachelor Society.
56. Cavalieri di Romolo (1-3-1910), Supreme Legion of the Knights of Romulus.
57. Subordinate Lodge of the Knights of Romulus (f.1912).
58. Daughter or Ladies of the Eternal City (1-1917).
59. Nuova Societa di Beneficenza Italiana (Christopher Columbus) (8-18-1922), New Italian Beneficial Society.

Franklin Mine
60. Societa Bersaglieri, Riflemen Society.
61. Societa Alessandro Lamarmora.
62. Societa Toscana Giovani Italia, Young Italy Tuscan Society.
63. Societa Reunite Figli di Columbo, Reunited Society of the Sons of Columbus. (terminated 10-20-1937).
64. Societa La Nuova Industria, New Industrial Society.

Hancock
65. New Industrial Benevolent Society (f.1903).
66. Lega Cittadina No. 2 (f. 1909-1937), Citizen's League No. 2.
67. Subordinate Lodge, Knight of Romulus No.2 (f. 1912).
68. Consozelle Society.

Laurium
69. Legione Giuseppe Garibaldi Loggia No. 61 (5-12-1896), Giuseppe Garibaldi Legion, Lodge No. 61.
70. Lega Cittadina di Mutuo Soccorso No. 1 (4-19-1910), Citizens' League of Mutual Aid.
71. Italian Commercial Club (f. 1910).

above: Carlo Bracco in his uniform of the Columbus Guarti in Calumet (Source: John Rastello)
MINERS, MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES

South Hecla
72. Lega Cittadina (f. 1919), Citizen’s League.

South Range
73. Cacciatori Italiani di Beneficenza, Beneficial Society of Italian Hunters.
74. Fratellanza Italiana, Italian Brotherhood.
75. Società Toscani di Beneficenza Unite, United Tuscan Beneficial Society.
76. Società Beneficenza Dante Alegieri.
78. Figli Società Beneficenza (8-18-1918), Sons of Italy Beneficial Society.
79. Figilie D’Italia (2-1919), Daughters of Italy.
81. Subordinate Lodge of the Knights of Romulus No. 3 (f. 1912).

Trimountain
82. Società Reali Carabinieri, Society of Royal Carabineers.

Wolverine
83. Lega Cittadina (f. 1919), Citizen’s League.

COLUMBUS DAY """"ARADE
above: Columbus Day parade (1939) in Caspian. (Source: Joe Fittante)

IRON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Caspian
84. Andrea Hofer Society.
86. Società di Mutuo Soccorso Figli d’Italia (2-28-1915) Sons of Italy Society of Mutual Aid.

Crystal Falls
87. Società di Vittorio Emmanuele (12-21-1913), Society of Victor Emmanuel.

Iron River
88. Società Italian di Mutuo Soccorso (10-25-1913), Italian Mutual Aid Society.
89. Società di Mutuo Soccorso Giordano Bruno (10-25-1913), Giordano Bruno Mutual Aid Society.
MINERS, MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES

90. Societa Italiana di Beneficenza (7-9-1935), (women's) society.

IRON COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Hurley
91. Italian Mutual Benevolent Society of the Gogogenic Range (2-24-1890).
92. Societa Bersaglieri Italiani di Savoia (8-28-1890), Society of Italian Riflemen of Savoy.
93. Societa Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso (12-1892), Italian Mutual Aid Society.
95. Speranza Society (f. 1895).
96. Quattro Abruzzi Society (6-25-1905).
98. Italian Library Club (1910).
99. Subordinate Lodge of the Knight of Romulus No. 6 (f. 1912).

100. Societa di Nord Italia, North Italy Society.
102. Italian Women's Club (3-1916).
103. Sons of Italy (1920).
104. Columbus Society (10-12-1929).
105. Foresters of America, Court Union of Heart No. 1 of Wisconsin.
106. Order of Eagles (large Italian membership) (1930s).

Iron Belt
108. Provident Society.

Pence
109. Societa Giuseppe Garibaldi di Mutuo Soccorso (8-22-1913)
Giuseppe Garibaldi Mutual Aid Society.
110. Speranza di Mutuo Soccorso.

KEWEENAW COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Ahmeek
III. Lega Cittadina (f. 1912), Citizens' League.

MARQUETTE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Ishpeming
113. Societa di Beneficenza Italiana (8-6-1899), Italian Beneficial Society.
114. Societa Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso, Umberto I (2-23-1902), Workmen's Mutual Aid Society, King Humbert I.
115. Confraternity of San Rocco (1918).
116. Societa di Mutuo Soccorso, San Rocco (9-17-1922), St. Rocco Mutual Aid Society formed by combining the Confraternity and the Social di Beneficenza Italiana.
117. Societa Napoletana di Mutuo Soccorso (6-5-1910), Neapolitan Mutual Aid Society.
119. Societa Americana-Italian di Mutuo Soccorso, San Rocco e San Antonio di Padova (9-20-1942), Italian American Mutual Aid Society of San Rocco and St. Anthony was created by combining the two organizations.

Negaunee
122. Foresters of America, Court Black Diamond No. 56 (women) (3-18-1901).
123. Societa di Mutuo Soccorso Giuseppe Mazzini (8-1-1907), Giuseppe Mazzini Italian Mutual Aid Society.
124. Societa di Mutuo Soccorso Lombarda-Veneta di Negaunee (9-10-1911), Lombardy-Venice Mutual Aid Society of Negaunee.
126. Societa Unite Diposero (1912).
127. Subordinate Lodge of the Knights of Romulus (f. 1911).
128. Italian Alpine Club (f. 1915).
MINERS, MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES

130. United Ancient Order of Druids (women) (1-17-1925).
132. Loggia della Neve (1981), Sons of Italy, Lodge of the Snow.

Princeton
133. Societa Guglielmo Marconi de Mutuo Soccorso (9-23-1907), Guglielmo Marconi Mutual Aid Society.

MENOMINEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Hermansville
134. Societa di Mutuo Soccorso Bella Venezia (1922), Beautiful Venice Mutual Aid Society.

Chapter 10
ITALIAN MINE OWNERS

One little known but fascinating aspect of Italian immigration history in the United States is the ownership of mines by the immigrants. Although this was not a widespread activity throughout the nation, there were a few Italians who owned and developed a variety of mines. They were found in Alabama owning small coal mines north of Birmingham in Cardiff and Republic; in the Kellogg-Wallace area of Idaho where they owned zinc-lead-silver mines and the Torino and Lombardy Companies are still in existence; in Alaska the Usibelli family continues to operate a very successful coal mining operation selling coal to Korea.

In Michigan some Italians became involved in the mining business. The two most important operations were in southern Michigan in Shiawassee County's coal mining region and in Marquette County's iron mining area of Negaunee. The coal mine in Shiawassee County was first purchased and operated by David Batista "Charles" Tarolli. He was born in the Austrian Tyrol and came to the United States in 1888. First he settled in New York state where he got a job digging ditches. He moved west after losing money in a grocery business because of his unwise extension of credit to poor risk customers. For a number of years he lived and worked in the Copper Country where he met fellow Italians who would help finance his future coal mining venture.

Having heard of the developing coal mines in Bay and Saginaw Counties to the south, Tarolli left the Copper Country. In Bay City he heard that the Six Mile Creek Coal Mine in Shiawassee County was for sale. In 1905-1906 he bought the mine for $500 and immediately made the necessary repairs. After inspecting the shafts he did not like their condition and had them replaced along with the equipment. The coal
Mine employed many Italian laborers and miners and some of these immigrants migrated from the Copper Country. They were housed in a boardinghouse located close to the mine and Mrs. Tarolli cooked for them. The coal was first sold to local furniture factories in Owosso for fuel and later the market was expanded and the business prospered.

In 1908 a group of Italian businessmen in the Calumet-Laurium area became interested in the mine. In March of that year, Michael Richetta, Bernard Bracco and J. Bracco visited the site and became very interested in investing in the New Haven Coal Mining Company. In the next few years these Italians and others: members of the Richetta and Quello families invested in the company. Eventually after a number of years Tarolli divested himself of the New Haven Coal Mining Company and it ceased to exist. He moved to Flint where he became involved in other businesses and that was the end of the Copper Country-Italian involvement in coal mining.

Philip Marchetti and Batista Barasa were two pioneer Italians who migrated to the Marquette Iron Range coming in 1863 and 1871 respectively. Both men became involved in real estate and owned property throughout the Negaunee area. In 1889 the two men held a half interest in land located approximately a mile east of Negaunee near the
MINERS, MERCHANTS, and MIDWIVES

Bunker Hill and Negaunee mines. They decided to explore for iron ore deposits and they were successful. In 1891 they incorporated the Barasa Iron Mining Company with capitalization at $1,000,000 and the officers were principally non-Italians from Marquette. Stock was issued and the corporation was in business. At first their efforts were unsuccessful. They explored with diamond drills and sunk a shaft, unfortunately in swampy ground. In 1892 they sunk a shaft only to strike slate. At this time the shaft went down 268 feet and there were 25 men employed at the site.

Throughout the 1890s the residents of Negaunee and especially the Italian immigrants hoped that the mine would be a great success. Work was continued on the original shaft and diamond drill exploration continued. In 1896 a new engine house was completed and the machinery was set in place. A new shaft was begun in April of that year and a year later it had reached 280 feet. Their efforts continued through 1899 but a year later the mine was temporarily closed. In 1902 there was activity at the site. Louis Newburger a representative of Paine, Webber & Company directed exploration in October 1906 but after that time work slowed down and the mine was never a great success.

Although the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company tried to purchase the mine from Barasa he refused to sell hoping for a rich strike in the future which was never realized. In the late 1980s all that remains of the mines is the memory and the deed to the land which the family proudly retains. These Italian mining ventures in Michigan were marginal and brought little financial renumeration to a few men who invested in them. Fortunately for the immigrants most of them were successful businessmen who did not have to rely on ownership of mines for their financial success.

Chapter 11

THE ITALIANS ON THE GOGEbic IRON RANGE

Colonial Era The first Italians in the vicinity of the Gogebic Iron Range arrived in the 18th century. The father and son team of Marin (or in Italian, Marini), originally from Genoa, served in the Upper Lakes Country. Paul Marin de la Mague (1692-1753) served in the West most of his life. In 1722 he was given command of the French post at Ashland, Wisconsin. He maintained the fur trade monopoly and also kept peace between the Sioux and the local Indians. In the process he made a fortune in furs. In the late 1740s he was given command of Green Bay, which was considered one of the most lucrative of all of the western posts. Marin prospered. His son Joseph followed into the West. In 1737 he was stationed at Fort Michilimackinac and two years later he went into northern Minnesota to discover mines and attempt to make peace with the Indians. In 1749 he was attached to the Ashland post and in 1752 he replaced his father in the Mississippi Valley. Eventually he returned to New France.

In 1791 another Italian, Count Paolo Andrea, visited the Lake Superior region in the summer. He led a scientific expedition checking the shape of the earth. Andrea was probably the first European to make a complete circumnavigation of the lake. In the process he passed the area that would become known as the Gogebic Iron Range.

Although these early Italians did not remain, while in French colonial service they did help expand the European frontier into the western Great Lakes country.

Migration to the Gogebic Range The Gogebic was the last of the three iron ranges of northern Michigan to be developed. It straddles the Michigan-Wisconsin boundary, running from Wakefield on the east to Iron Belt on the west. The first mining was done in 1884.
mining operations were not consequential from a commercial standpoint until the railroad connected the mines with the port of Ashland after 1886. In the beginning, as was characteristic of the other mining ranges, there was no settlement, nor a local population to extract the ore and so the development of this range depended on the introduction of labor from outside. Mines were opened at Bessemer and Ironwood in Michigan and in the vicinity of Hurley in Wisconsin practically simultaneously.

The earliest miners were English, Irish, and Swedish, who came from the Marquette and Menominee ranges east of the Gogebic. However, because of a lack of emigration from the Old Country, movement westward, and a second generation that did not want to work in the mines, those ethnic groups no longer formed a pool of labor to be tapped. Thus the task of providing unskilled labor for the mines fell on the Finns, Italians, Poles and others. These immigrants had been going to the range since its opening.

The first Italians were introduced by operators at Hurley, which quickly became the center of Italian population. The majority of Italians were from Tyrol, Piedmont, Venetia, Abruzzi-Molise, Calabria, and Sicily. There was a steady influx of Italians over the years except for the years of the depression in 1892 and 1893 and during and after the labor strike of 1894. After 1900 south Italians began to migrate to the range.

First brought to Hurley, the Italians quickly found jobs throughout the range in the expanding mining industry, which needed hundreds of unskilled laborers with strong backs to do the grueling work of traming, or shoveling ore into cars. In 1910 the weekly wage in the mines was $14.06. Eventually these trammers rose in the mine hierarchy and many of them became miners and foremen. In 1910 the Italians comprised over 19% of the foreign-born population on the range and ranked second only to the Finns.

The Italian population in 1910:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Italians employed</th>
<th>Total Italian population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ironwood, MI</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessemer, MI</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsay &amp; Wakefield</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurley, WI</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,102</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business Activity Many of the Italian immigrants had the driving force to become independent businessmen. Thus after working in the mines for a period of time, they would accumulate enough money to open their own businesses. Hurley, the center of the Italian population, had many Italian-owned businesses.

In the beginning many immigrants opened saloons. These were social centers of the immigrant community and they were relatively easy to establish. Just about every community on the range had an Italian-owned and -operated saloon. In later years many of these same Italians and their sons became liquor distributors in the area. For example, in the 1980s there is Fiori Beverage in Bessemer, Pisani Company in Ironwood and several in Hurley.

The other businesses were groceries and bakeries. These shops provided the Italian population with their traditional foods, such as olive oil, codfish, polenta, and varieties of pasta. The bakeries, such as Pricco's in Bessemer, delivered fresh, warm bread even on the coldest winter days.

However these Italian immigrants did not limit themselves to these businesses. Some operated fruit stores and candy and ice cream shops. Others ventured into services and commodities, like the Contrattos, who operated a grading and coal delivery business. In Hurley, David
Cattoi was one of the few Italian blacksmiths in the Upper Peninsula. Seeing the demand for steamship tickets, Mr. Chioto, some time prior to 1905, opened a ticket office in Hurley and also provided the Italians with an insurance agency.

On the Gogebic range Italian immigrants were able to become involved in businesses, while in other parts of Michigan this was not possible. For instance, in lower Michigan Italians were confectioners and fruiterers, but in the early days were not able to go beyond these rudimentary concerns. Thus we have a unique experience in the western Upper Peninsula.

**Banking** A unique development took place among Italians in Hurley on March 26, 1920, when a number of them organized the Hurley National Bank. It opened in the Marta Building on the corner of Silver and 3rd Streets. It was capitalized at $50,000 with a surplus fund of $5,000. On the first day of operation the bank took in $86,000 in deposits. At that time the president was Charles Bonino and Otto Erspamer was an assistant cashier. The bank did well during the prospering 1920s, but failed on June 24, 1932, during the Great Depression.

**Farming** Although farming was not a major incentive for Italians migrating to the Gogebic Range, some of them went beyond cultivating backyard gardens. The Contratto family developed a farm on the outskirts of Bessemer. In the Hurley area some of the Italians like the Bugnis first operated lumber camps until the land was cleared and then went into farming. In Kimball at a place locally known as "Dago Valley" a number of families like the Vittones and the Brunellis developed a series of Italian-owned farms. Some of the descendants of these early settlers continue to farm the land. These farmers raised potatoes and had dairy farms.

**Life** The Italian immigrants who settled the Gogebic Range brought with them traditional values of God, family, and country. The early immigrants usually came without their families and were single. They originally wanted to make some money and return to the Old Country. However, the mining companies, trying to cultivate a constant labor force, induced them to stay and to bring over their families and friends to work in the mines.

Many of the Italian families lived in company housing, although there were some Italians who bought their own houses. The large number of single men in the community caused many families to take in boarders, which became a major task for the women. Most families had large gardens to supply them with all of their vegetables through the year. Sometimes a family would rent an acre from the mining company to grow a supply of potatoes. A cow was kept for milk, butter and cheese, which was sometimes sold, and a pig was kept to process into sausage in the fall. In September-October the men would order grapes from outside, as most families produced about 150 gallons of wine per year for their own use. Others further processed the grape skins and distilled them into a potent, clear liquor called grappa.

The women remained in the home, taking care of the family and boarders. The income from the boarders usually greatly augmented the family earnings. Widows kept their families together and sold dairy products or got outside jobs as laundresses or janitoresses. Others might take over their husband's business. Very few married women got into their own businesses.

In a majority of cases, because of migratory patterns, many of the people living in a community were related and in some cases actually recreated their village settlement pattern from the Old Country on the Gogebic Range.
Religion Naturally religion played an important role in the lives of the Italians. In Hurley the Italian population was large enough so for all practical purposes St. Mary’s Church was an Italian church. For many years Fr. Gilbert looked after the congregation. From Hurley he would say Mass in various Wisconsin towns.

In the other communities on the Range the Italians attended the local Catholic churches. In 1906 there were 50 Italian families in the St. Ambrose parish in Ironwood. At the same time there were about 50 families in St. Sebastian’s parish in Bessemer. The Italians were second only to the Poles, who numbered 80 families. In 1905 the Italian society along with other societies collected donations to enlarge the church.

Anthony J. Righino from St. Mary’s in Hurley was probably the first Italian-American to be ordained from the Range. This occurred in December, 1930.

Newspapers Because most of the Italians on the Gogebic range were literate, there was a demand for an Italian-language newspaper. In January, 1903, La Nostra Terra was started by Frank Marta. Its subscription rate was $2 per year. The paper provided the Italian community with a variety of news and ads. The newspaper continued until September, 1913, when it began to publish in English. However, even then it carried Italian advertisements and serialized Italian-language romances.

Italian Organizations The Italians who settled the range were quick to develop mutual beneficial societies. Members paid monthly dues of usually 50 cents and then received a daily compensation when they were ill or injured. Heirs received a death benefit. This took the place of company insurance or state compensation.

Besides providing these important services the clubs were social and cultural outlets for the immigrant men and women. They flourished until World War H. One of the biggest celebrations for these clubs was the annual Columbus Day (October 12) affair. The earliest celebration can be traced back to 1892, when the 400th anniversary was celebrated in Hurley with a parade, speeches, dinner and a dance. This traditional event was continued for years and today the various societies still have a Columbus Day dinner-dance.

A complete list of Italian organizations in the Upper Peninsula forms a separate chapter of this book.
Chapter 12
JOHN DAPRATO: MICHIGAN'S FIRST ITALIAN-BORN STATE LEGISLATOR

In Michigan's Upper Peninsula Italian immigrants became involved in local politics from a very early date after their arrival. Michael Borgo served on the first Red Jacket (Calumet) village council in April, 1875. During the next 25 years Italian immigrants continued to play important roles in village government. This was also true in Iron Mountain. It was from this latter community that John Daprato developed his business and a political base to go on and become the first Italian-born legislator in the history of the Upper Peninsula.

His story goes back to the Old Country where on October 24, 1852, Daprato was born in the little town of Barga, Lucca, in the province of Tuscany. He attended local schools until he was 12 years of age and in 1867 left for Chicago to find his fortune among relatives who had preceded him. At first he worked with his cousin making church statuary at the Daprato Statuary Company. In 1876 he left the company and was employed by D. B. Fisk & Company, a wholesale millinery. Daprato worked for Fisk for 13 years as a hat pattern maker. In this rather unique occupation he cast hat models in plaster and then into metal.

Ill health forced Daprato to resign his position at Fisk and move north to Iron Mountain, a booming iron mining community. In 1889 he went into a partnership with a Swiss-Italian immigrant, Charles Rigassi. The two men operated a large general store dealing in a variety of American and Italian goods, hardware, and steamship tickets. They eventually became the most prominent Italian-owned and operated grocery in Iron Mountain.

Daprato was a tall, thin man who was known throughout the community to have a big heart and friendly disposition. He assisted many newly arrived Italian immigrants get started in the community with
loans, advice and encouragement. He was also well-liked throughout the entire community.

Daprato was married to Aurelia Ginocchio in 1884. Aurelia was born in Chiovari, Italy, attended college there and at 18 years of age migrated to the United States. They had two children: John G., born in Chicago and deceased while attending college, and Nino, who endured into his 90s and died in the early 1980s at his home in Parkesburg, Pennsylvania.

A Republican, Daprato was always interested in local and state politics. In 1893, he represented the Third Ward of Iron Mountain on the city council. Three years later he was endorsed by the Citizens' Party as alderman from the Third Ward. He was elected to the Republican county convention in 1894. Daprato served on the cemetery board of trustees and in 1896 he was head of the arrangement committee for the 4th of July celebration. With this career in local politics behind him, Daprato ran in November, 1912 as the Republican candidate for the state legislature, winning the election in a field of four candidates. In 1914 he garnered 2085 votes against Frank Parent's 856. Two years later Thomas E. Dillon received 1141 votes against Daprato's 2614. On November 5, 1918, Daprato received 2203 votes against Dillon's 924.

In the state capitol Daprato proved to be a cautious conservative and "was recognized as one of the most honest and sincere of Michigan's legislators...." When he was presented with a piece of legislation he would check with the attorney general's office concerning its constitutionality and then he would spend several days studying it before he cast his vote. While in Lansing he maintained strong ties with the people of his district and proved to be extremely helpful when asked for assistance. At age 68 he decided to retire from politics and did not run in the 1920 election.

Daprato was prominent and active in a number of fraternal organizations. He was a Thirty-Second Degree Mason in the Chicago Oriental Consistory. In Chicago he belonged to the Silver Link Lodge No. 521 of the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) and he had passed all of the chairs. In Iron Mountain he was president of the Italian Mutual Beneficial Society and he also served as president of the Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula.

Daprato devoted his time to his grocery business once he left politics. Finally in 1929 he sold it to the Serena family who continued to operate it for many years. The former legislator maintained a keen interest in politics and in the 1930s he would meet his friends in his former store and sit around discussing the pressing questions of the day. At age 87, Daprato was still able to oversee his former store when in 1939 he took over for a week while the Serenas vacationed. On February 1, 1940, death claimed this immigrant who had such a successful business and political career.
A careful study of the local records shows that the first Italians to settle the central Upper Peninsula came in the 1860s. By 1867 Philip Marchetti, Charles Monta and Paul Coppo were purchasing land in the vicinity of Negaunee. Five years later Anthony Bonetti and John Flora were owners of property in Negaunee and a year later (1873) John Bastedo, a wagonmaker, was residing in Negaunee and John Mazara was a laborer employed at the Jackson Mine.

Two of the earliest and more prominent Italians in Marquette County were Philip Marchetti and Batista Barasa. Marchetti was born on the island of Corsica in 1813. Although under French control today, Corsica was governed by Genoa until 1768, when it was sold to France. Marchetti learned his trade as a stone cutter at the Carrara marble quarries of Tuscany. During the last phases (January-November, 1856) of the Crimean War he was a private in the British Italian Legion, which was composed of Italians not subjects of the Kingdom of Sardinia. By October, 1860, Philip was plying his trade in railroad construction in Massachusetts, where he married Josephine Cannoni.

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Chapter 13

PHILIP MARCHETTI AND BATISTA BAR ASA:
PIONEER SETTLERS

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above: The original Marketty homestead near the Michigan Iron Industry Museum, Negaunee. Later it was used as a camp by the family. (Source: Philip Marketty)

below: Josephine and Philip Marketty/Marchetti were pioneer Italians to Marquette County arriving at Negaunee in the early 1860s. (Source: Philip Marketty)

above: Batista and Mary Ann Barasa early Italian residents of Negaunee. (Source: Philip Marketty)
Druids, a branch of the national organization, with lodges in Bessemer and Wakefield. The women would meet and socialize at picnics, masquerades, dances, and card parties. The Lady Druids continue to exist and meet as a social organization. Similar organizations did not develop in Ishpeming and the Gwinn district. As the years passed and the women became Americanized many of them joined local lodges such as the Order of Eagles and others.

Some Italian women practiced folk medicine. They had a variety of Old Country remedies for nearly every ailment. Chamomile, an herb flower, was brewed as a tea for upset stomachs. Garlic was worn around the neck by both children and adults to ward off colds and other illnesses. Some of the women were midwives, providing invaluable assistance to physicians attending young Italian mothers.

The hundreds of Italian women who settled Marquette County helped to create a strong society. Although they did not play a public role within the community, they did maintain the home and their families, important Italian traditions. Furthermore they provided homes for many Italian miners and laborers essential to the development of the industrial base of the county.

Chapter 15
ITALIANS IN MARQUETTE COUNTY

The Iron Era The Marquette Iron Range was the first of the iron ranges to be discovered and developed in the Upper Peninsula. The history of immigration to the range is the history of the mining industry in the region. On September 19, 1844, William Burt while surveying with his party discovered iron ore in the vicinity of Negaunee. Within the next few years mining companies were formed to extract the ore, a road and then railroad were constructed connecting the mines in Negaunee and then Ishpeming with the port of Marquette which was established in 1849.

The county had no labor supply and from the beginning all of the labor needed in the mines had to be imported into the region. The first immigrants were Cornish, Irish, Germans, and French Canadians who began arriving in the summer of 1849 in Marquette. Many of them found employment in the mines which were open pits. The miners had more experience than common day laborers who merely removed the ore and thus a class distinction developed from the very beginning. In 1874 the first shaft was sunk and the underground mine became the principal means of extracting iron ore.

The first known Italian in Marquette was Eugenio Borgi who was born in Naples in 1836 and in the summer of 1860 was working as a day laborer. Also listed on the Federal census was Mary Black, a 29 year old woman from Piedmont employed as a servant. Unfortunately that is the only time that we hear of these two Italian immigrants.

In the summer of 1863 Philip and Josephine Marchetti arrived at Eagle Mills, east of Negaunee with a group of Irish. He was from Corsica, had migrated to the Italian mainland and worked in the Carrara marble quarries. Soon after serving in the Italian Legion during the Crimean War he migrated to the United States. By October 1860
the Marchettis were living in western Massachusetts where Philip worked on railroad tunnel construction. Their daughter Mary Ann was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1860. Although they kept their property at Eagle Mills and used it as a farm they eventually moved into Negaunee where Philip developed real estate holdings.

Another early arrival was Batista Barasa who was born in Quasolo, Italy in 1837. He worked in France and Spain with his brother on railroad tunnel construction before he migrated to Massachusetts and eventually to Negaunee in 1871. His brother Peter (b. 1842) came to the United States in 1877 and three years later was living in Negaunee. By 1873 there were other Italians in Negaunee: John Bastedo, a wagon maker and John Mazara, a laborer at the Jackson Mine. By the late 1870s Dominic Dighera was also a county resident. These and other early Italians were attracted to Marquette County through the efforts of Barasa or what is known as "chain migration:" One immigrant would arrive in a location and then sent letters which brought his friends and relatives. The area was developing and there was ample economic opportunity.

With the development of shaft mining the earlier immigrants were no longer needed on the range and most of them began moving to newly opened mining frontiers. As a result the mine operators began to seek other immigrants. The Scandinavians began to arrive in the spring of 1874 when 75 to 100 Swedes arrived. Two years later, having gotten established on the Marquette Range these immigrants moved to the newly opened iron mines on the Menominee Range because of better pay. Thus there was a demand for new laborers. In 1883 Finns were brought in for the first time and used as laborers loading iron ore from stock piles.

Although there were 41 Italians in Negaunee in 1880 it was seven years later that the first large scale migration of Italians began into the County. At first the Italians were from northern Italy: Lombardy, Piedmont, Venice and the Tyrol and they settled in Negaunee. Initially 50 Italians arrived; followed in the spring of 1888 by an additional 100. Although they inherited the jobs at the lowest end of the employment scale as tramers or iron ore shovelers, they wrote back to Italy and encouraged others to join them. In the 1890s southern Italians primarily from Calabria but also from Naples and Sicily settled in Ishpeming. They experienced a similar migration process. By 1910 Italians comprised 15% - 16% of the labor force on the Range. There were a great many Italians working as miners and in many of the mines a greater proportion of the Italians were working as laborers and tramers.

In 1910, of the 907 Italians with occupations, 741 or 81.6% were miners. There were also 51 Italians (6.1) working on the railroad, 24 or 2.8% listed as laborers, and 20 working in the iron furnaces in Marquette. Most of the Italian businessmen were located in Negaunee and Gwinn at that time. There were 16 boardinghouse keepers, 11 saloonkeepers, 5 merchants, 5 bakers and 3 shoemakers. This breakdown of occupations was consistent with other Italian communities in the Upper Peninsula. The following chart provides a complete listing of Italians and their occupations. It should be remembered that the Federal census was never completely accurate so these figures should be used conservatively.

Table 1: Locations and Occupations of Italians

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<td>100</td>
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(continued on the following page)
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Politics Although it was usually atypical in other areas of the United States, the Italian immigrants in Marquette County successfully became involved in local politics. Batista Barasa who became a citizen in 1879 was elected to the Negaunee City Council when the community received its charter in 1890. Felix Chiabotto, a Negaunee merchant was elected to represent the 2nd Ward in 1897. In Ishpeming, Michael Tassin was a policeman and well-known for his efforts to get his fellow Italians to become citizens and then to vote on election day. These activities of the immigrants were unique considering that elsewhere in Michigan, Italian-Americans did not become involved in politics until the 1920s. In the late 1980s this interest in politics continues. Frank Valenti who was born in Italy serves on the county commission. Representative Dominic Jacobetti who was born in Marquette County has served in the Michigan House of Representatives since 1954 and holds the record for serving the state in public office.

Entertainment and Recreation The Italian love for music is well known. As early as 1884 the Marquette Mining Journal noted that an Italian band provided excellent dance music in Marquette County but nothing more was heard of this group. A number of Italian music teachers appeared in the various communities such as Nettie R.
Place. In the summer it provided music for picnic dances. In July 1910 it was formally organized and continued to entertain the public. In 1916 the Negaunee Star Band was led by Peter Zabotti and played social dances. In July Professor Joseph Bangiovanni’s String Orchestra was presenting "jitney dances" in Negaunee's Cleveland Park. Nine years later Joseph Violetta was the leader of the Negaunee City Band.

The most famous band in Ishpeming's history was Vampa's Band. Professor Vampa arrived in the community in 1915 and began organizing the new band. He was able to get even the most musically illiterate to read music and by January 1916 his band with thirty-four members played for the first time and was an immediate success. Vampa's Band played at the Marquette County Fair, Memorial Day and Columbus Day celebrations and at other dances and festivals given by local clubs and lodges.

Then at the peak of the band's rise to success Vampa left town for Flint and eventually Italy. In March 1919 the band was reorganized with Felix Catania of Chicago as the new director. However due to a contractual dispute Catania left Ishpeming by July. In August 1920 Vamp returned from Italy and in August 1921 the new band made its first appearance at the annual St. Rocco-St. Anthony Day festa. The band also played in local theaters, at dances and one year at the L'Anse firemen's tournament. A little later Vamp joined forces with Frank Trombley to create a short-lived symphonic orchestra with between 65 and 75 members.

The local Italians directed their entertainment and recreation toward their families. Home parties were popular with an accordion and violin or guitar providing the music on a Saturday night. During the warm summer months families organized picnics while the Italian lodges also held annual picnics. The men played bocci in backyard or saloon-side courts and got into games of morra especially for drinks in saloons. Some of the Italians fished and hunted both as recreation and also as a means of augmenting their families’ food supply.

**Home Life** The first Italians who arrived on the Marquette Range were usually single men who once they got settled sent for their wives or got married. Many lived in company housing, at first, but tended to purchase their own homes when this was possible. Families took in boarders from the same village or those who were family members as a means of providing housing and also adding to the family income.

Each family maintained a garden which provided the household with much of the vegetables that the household needed during the year. Besides what was planted the women and children gathered fruits and berries and made jams and preserves from them.
If possible families kept a pig and cow. In November the pig was usually butchered and processed into sausage. It was sometimes said that every part of the pig was used except the squeal. The cow provided milk, butter and cheese for the family and if there was a surplus it was sold to customers in the vicinity. The Italian family became self-sufficient so that they usually only had to purchase items such as coffee, sugar, or olive oil. Pasta and Italian bread could be made at home but it was usually purchased.

In the late summer orders were taken for grapes and beginning in September train loads of grapes arrived at railroad sidings in Negaunee and Ishpeming. Most families made as many as 150 gallons of wine which would last them through the year. Some people would take the remaining grape skins and distill them into a potent alcoholic drink called grappa. Today a number of people make sausage from family recipes but the wine making tradition has declined because of the cost of making your own wine.

**Cultural Activities** Most of the Italian immigrants who settled on the Marquette Range were literate. As a result many of them kept in touch with the news through Italian-language newspapers. Some subscribed to papers published in New York City like the ever-popular *Il Progresso* while others read the long-lived *Il Minatore Italiano* (The Italian Miner) which was published in Laurium between 1896 and the 1930s or the transient papers such as *La Democrazione Italiana* of Hancock (1917) or *La Sentinella* (The Sentinel) published in Calumet around 1906.

In Negaunee a group of Italians organized a dramatic group. During the 1920s and 1930s the group entertained the Italian colony with popular plays produced in the Negaunee High School.

Columbus Day (October 12) was a day on which the Italians affirmed their ties with their adopted nation. From the early part of the 20th century the day has been celebrated in a variety of ways over the years. In the early days there were elaborate parades, dinners, dances and political speeches. Since Columbus Day came close to election day, politicians saw it as a good time to campaign and thus attended the festivities. Today the day continues to be celebrated with a special recognition dinner sponsored by the Loggia della Neve, Order of the Sons of Italy.

The Italian communities on the Marquette Iron Range never had their own Catholic Church. They made up a significant portion of the congregations of St. Anthony's Church in Gwinn, St. Paul's in Negaunee, and St. John's in Ishpeming. A few Italians joined some of the local Protestant churches.
Lodges and Clubs  The mutual beneficial societies were a characteristic feature of all Italian communities wherever immigrants settled. At a time when there were no Social Security benefits nor unemployment or disability insurance the Italians along with other immigrants established these societies. They paid an initiation fee and then 50 cents per month. If they were sick or injured they received $1.00, their families received a benefit at death and the membership attended the funeral under pain of a severe fine.

The oldest of the Italian fraternal organization in Marquette County was Society Fratellanza e Mutuo Soccorso/ Fraternal and Mutual Aid Society which was established in Negaunee in 1890 and incorporated on February 6, 1892. Within a few years it boasted over 500 members who paid $1.00 per month for illness and accident benefits and an additional $2.00 for death benefit which was collected when needed.

The biggest activity for the lodge was the annual picnic held in July or August. In early July 1910 their annual picnic was held in Cleveland Park where there was boating, swimming and athletic events, eating contests and morra. A seven piece band was included in the 1915 picnic which became a common feature. During the Italo-Turkish War in 1911-1912 the lodge sent $25 to the Italian Red Cross for the widows and children of Italian soldiers killed in the fighting. Over the years the organization was active but as the immigrants died out there was no longer any interest in such an organization. On October 15, 1962 the lodge was closed and the remaining members were paid with the assets.

Over the years a number of fraternal organizations were formed in Negaunee. Society Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso Giuseppe Mazzini/Italian Mutual Aid Society, Giuseppe Mazzini was founded on June 24, 1908 with over 130 charter members. North Italians from Lombardy and Venice on September 10, 1911 established the Societa Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso Lombarda-Venetia di Negaunee/Italian Mutual Aid Society, Lombardy-Venetia of Negaunee. They were incorporated on March 15, 1912. They first met in Scandinavian Hall where they wrote their constitution. They held their annual picnic in Cleveland Park and participated in both July 4th and Columbus Day parades and celebrations. In 1912 the Society Unite Diposero was established and on September 28, 1913 Grove No. 3 of the United Order of the Druids was formed and in 1925 a women's branch was created. Both organizations are still active in Negaunee in the 1980s.

A little known organization: Alpine Italian Club flourished around 1915. There is little information concerning this lodge except that it existed and was incorporated in Marquette County.

Four of the lodges: Mazzini, Diposero, Fratellanza, and Lombardia joined in securing plots in the Negaunee cemetery. These plots were for single members without families in the community. A large monument which is still standing was surrounded by the graves of members. When these plots were no longer in demand they were sold to private individuals.

Lega Cittadina Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso, No.1/Italian Citizen League of Mutual Aid was formed in May 1918 with 50 members and incorporated on February 23, 1919. Its goal was "of having every adult Italian parentage in Marquette County duly qualified as a citizen of the United States as well as member of the League." The lodge promoted attendance at citizenship classes held in the high school by the Negaunee Board of Education and there were sick and death benefits. In 1920 two-thirds of its members were from Negaunee while the rest were from Ishpeming and North Lake and there was hope of establishing a branch in Princeton.

On September 23, 1907 the Italian colony in Princeton formed the Society Guglielmo Marconi di Mutuo Soccorso. They constructed their own hall where they held their meetings, dinners, and dances. The structure stood until the early 1980s although the society had been disbanded earlier.

The Italian community is Ishpeming established a number of lodges whose histories have been intertwined over the years. On August 6, 1899 Society di Beneficenza Italiana was established, followed on February 23, 1902 by Society Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso, Umberto I. The Society di Mutuo Soccorso, San Rocco was created on September 17, 1922 by uniting the Confraternity of San Rocco formed in 1918 and the Society di Beneficenza Italian, due to the fact that the members belonged to both lodges. The name of the Society Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso was changed to Society Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso, San Antonio di Padova on April 26, 1936. The last amalgamation of these societies took place on September 20, 1942 when the two remaining were united and renamed: Society Americanita Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso, San Roccoe San Antonio di Padova. In the late 1980s the San Rocco Society as it is popularly known continues to celebrate the feast day of St. Rocco in mid-August. In the past the celebration was elaborated as witnessed in August 1943 when Frank Vallela was the chairman:

9:30 a.m. music
10:00 a.m. parade through Ishpeming to St. John's Church
11:15 a.m. High Mass, St. John's
12:30 p.m. parade through Ishpeming
2:00 p.m. public picnic with band music and events: women’s nail driving contest, "coins in the pan," and the greased pole contest in which the lucky individual who reached the top won $5.00 which was placed there
7:00 p.m. Negaunee City Band
8:00 p.m. Negaunee Turners, an aerobatic and musical set 9:45 p.m. Negaunee Turners

Today the celebration continues to be held in downtown Ishpeming with the Mass, parade and less elaborate events held in the church yard. The St. Rocco Society is one of the very few original active societies in Upper Michigan and the only society with a religious orientation.

Italians from the Neapolitan community of Montefalcone in Benevento in Ishpeming formed a society of their own on June 5, 1910 which was appropriately named: Society Napoletana di Mutuo Soccaso ...Composto di Falconese. The first president was Leonardo Avella. The organization continued in existence until the early 1970s when it too was disbanded.

The Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula was organized in October 1909 in Calumet. Its purpose was to unite the numerous Italian societies throughout the region and over the years a number of Marquette County societies were members. Over the years a number of its conventions were held in Negaunee and Ishpeming where there were parades and grand celebrations. However over the years interest in the organization declined and in September 1982 it was formally disbanded in Iron Mountain.

With the decline and termination of most of the old lodges a new idea was brought forth by Msgr. David Spelgatti of Ishpeming. A new organization should be organized to help preserve the Italian ethnicity which still existed in the county. In 1964 the Paisano Club of Upper Michigan was formed with the goals of commemorating, preserving and highlighting the traditions of the Italian immigrants and their American-born children. Since that time the club has flourished with branches forming in Dickinson and Gogebic Counties. In 1982 President Leonard Altobello and Msgr. Spelgatti were successful in their efforts to secure Professor Russell M. Magnaghi of Northern Michigan University to carry out the necessary research to preserve the history of the immigrant experience in Upper Michigan. As a result of this encouragement and generous financial assistance, artifacts, photographs, published and unpublished material along with 150 oral interviews on tape have been preserved. To date the Paisano Club is the only organization in the state of Michigan to conduct such an extensive research project on immigrant history.

The last of the ethnic organizations to be formed in the county was the Loggia della Neve/Lodge of the Snow of the Order of the Sons of Italy. It was established in May 1981 and is presently flourishing. It provides money for charitable organizations, scholarships and has an annual recognition dinner held in October to also commemorate Columbus Day. Thus we see that the Italian heritage in Marquette county continues to be maintained.
above: The original Marketty homestead near the Michigan Iron Industry Museum, Negaunee. Later it was used as a camp by the family. (Source: Philip Marketty)

below: Josephine and Philip Marketty/Marchetti were pioneer Italians to Marquette County arriving at Negaunee in the early 1860s. (Source: Philip Marketty)

above: Batista and Mary Ann Barasa early Italian residents of Negaunee. (Source: Philip Marketty)
eventually constructed a home on the present site of the Negaunee city government building. The first cabin was used for many years by the Marchettis as a farm, picnic ground and camp.

Batista Barasa's career closely paralleled that of Marchetti. He was born in Quassolo, Piedmont, Italy, on August 18, 1837. His brother Anthony was a construction contractor in Barcelona, Spain and when Batista got older he worked for his brother constructing railroad tunnels in Spain, France, and Germany. Barasa came to the United States in 1864 and went to Springfield, Massachusetts, where he worked on a railroad construction project.

In 1871 Barasa moved to Marquette County. At first he was employed as a blacksmith at the Jackson Mine. He married American-born Mary Ann Marchetti, Philip's daughter, in 1875. She had a strong positive influence on him throughout his life.

Both Marchetti and Barasa owned and operated saloons for short periods. In the 1890s Barasa ran a saloon to pay off some debts, but sold it once the obligation was satisfied. Barasa was a landowner and speculator and eventually owned several hundred acres of land in Negaunee and vicinity, in Marquette city and in Gogebic County.

In the process of land speculation both Barasa and Marchetti purchased iron-rich lands. In 1889 these two Italians interested a number of people, primarily from the Marquette area, to incorporate the Barasa Iron Mining Company and stock was issued valued at $1 million. The 80 acres of land jointly owned by the two men was located about a mile east of Negaunee in the vicinity of the Bunker Hill and Negaunee mines. During the decade of the 1890s, exploratory work went slowly and there were numerous problems. The first shaft had to be shut down because of quicksand in 1892, and 25 men were temporarily laid off. In 1897 a new shaft was sunk on more solid ground and was more successful, going to a depth of 280 feet. Throughout the decade reports and newspapers were optimistic that this mine would be a success. In 1900 Philip died and the mine passed to his sons and work continued. Three years later, 8,760 tons of ore were removed and in 1904 the mine was still in operation. The mine provided some royalties but it was never the success that people had hope it would be. This is the only instance of Italians becoming involved in an iron mine.

Barasa was the first known Italian in Marquette County to become involved in local politics and he became concerned about the civic betterment of Negaunee. As was true of most Italians, Barasa became a staunch American citizen and was devoted to his adopted country. When asked why he was not interested in visiting Italy, he replied, "The United States is good enough for anyone." In April, 1891, Barasa was the first Italian to run for a seat on the Negaunee city council.

Representing the Second Ward, Barasa beat his opponent, James H. Rough, by 58 votes. While on the city council from 1891 until 1893, he received $6 for serving on the Board of Registration and Elections.

Barasa also maintained close ties with the Italian community. He encouraged many Italians to come to the United States and settle in Marquette County. When they arrived he aided them in the painful process of Americanization. He was also active in local Italian organizations and helped to establish one of the first fraternal societies in Negaunee. The Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula, established in 1909 to unite many of the Italian societies throughout the Upper Peninsula, was another organization Barasa became involved in.

Marchetti died on March 12, 1900, and Barasa died on January 30, 1920, after successful careers. Both men are excellent examples of Italian immigrants who came to Upper Michigan and helped to develop the land and its resources. Their stories provide new insights into the Italian immigrant experience in Marquette County.
Women immigrants played a quiet but important role in the development of the Italian communities in Marquette County. This aspect of county history has never been researched or written about in the past. The results of a two year research project entitled "Italian Heritage in the Upper Peninsula" are presented here.

The earliest Italians to settle in Marquette County, Philip and Josephine Marketty/Marchetti arrived in the summer of 1863. Josephine was born in Italy in 1836 and first settled in western Massachusetts before moving to the county. In the beginning, life was difficult on the frontier. The Marchettis lived in a log house and there were no conveniences. Josephine followed the life style of many Italian women. By 1880 she had six children ranging in age from six to 20 years of age and she also cared for five boarders who worked in the iron mines. Her daughter, Mary Ann, married another early Italian immigrant in the county, Batista Barasa. Until her death in 1917, Mary Ann proved to be a strong-willed individual who took the initiative and greatly aided her husband in his various enterprises.

The development of the iron mines in Gwinn, Ishpeming, and Negaunee attracted many Italians. In 1900 there were 526 Italians in the county and by 1910 the immigrant population peaked at 1,251. In 1920 the figure had declined to 1,027 and 10 years later it had fallen to 746.

The Italian women were usually preceded by the men, who came and worked in the mines for a number of years in order to amass enough money to send for the women. The mining companies encouraged the men to marry and settle down because this would create permanent and stable populations and a steady labor supply. Many of the men returned to Italy to accompany their wives to the United
States, while others simply sent for them. Single men could either return to the Old Country and court a local woman, or they could rely on a local matchmaker. One of these matchmakers was Angelina "Grandma" Terzaghi (b. 1874). By 1910 she had tragically seen her husband and six of her nine children die. However she carried on and operated a boarding house which catered to relatives and natives of her village in the province of Lombardy. Over a period of time she would size up the young men to see if they were reliable, good providers, and would make a niece, sister, relative or friend in Italy a good husband. She would act as the go-between and letters would be exchanged between the two individuals. Possibly as soon as a few weeks passed, the prospective bride would be at the Negaunee train depot. The young woman would stay with relatives and a short courtship would take place before the wedding. If the male was not interested in the young lady, there were always other single men who were looking for wives. Other single men married women by proxy, the marriage having been arranged. Under these circumstances, the women had little or nothing to say as to who they married or where they lived.

Married or unmarried, the Italian women were in for a shock when they came to the United States, with its foreign language, culture and customs. The environment of the Upper Peninsula further shocked many of the women. Josephine D'Angelo went from central Italy to Gwinn. Because she was coming to an advanced country like the United States, she expected conveniences like electricity, indoor plumbing, running water and cobblestone streets. However she found none of these in Gwinn. In many cases these women were unhappy and cried for months wanting to return to familiar faces and country. However they gradually learned to live in the new land.

Life for the immigrants was different but not as difficult as formerly believed. In most cases people of the same nationality lived together in the same community. The women found that they could shop in stores operated by Italian-speaking merchants. Many of the banks hired Italian-speaking clerks to cater to the immigrants. The women could survive without having to speak English. Usually they learned English from their children once they attended school.

The Italian women followed the traditional pattern of raising families and maintaining the home. In large urban centers, like Chicago or Detroit, factory jobs were available to immigrant women, but this was not the case in Marquette County. As a result families found that they could augment their incomes by taking in boarders. For instance, in 1900, 65% of the Italian families in Negaunee took in boarders and the average number was 6.7 per household. This figure remained constant for the next decade, and probably longer. Keeping boarders thus became a major occupation for women, although the 1910 census office refused to acknowledge this and did not list the women as having an occupation.

A look at some individual cases will give the reader a better understanding of the different situation for women. They had to work long and hard hours. Laundry had to be done by hand and the mining clothes were heavy with red dust. Meals had to be prepared and the boarders might demand different foods for lunch. Then there was the house to be maintained and the children to be cared for. It was not uncommon for some of these women to be found scrubbing the wooden kitchen floors well into the wee hours of the morning.

Candida Bonesso was 48 years old in 1910, and had arrived in Negaunee four years earlier. She operated a boarding house with 11 boarders. Catherine Gaviligia had four children ranging in age from four to 10 and she cared for six boarders. At the same time in Princeton, Dora De Martin, who had been married for two years, had a small daughter and cared for six boarders. This was also true of Antonia Paris. Paulina Benglia married in 1899, came to the United States seven years later and in 1910 with the help of a 15 year old servant maintained a household which included 26 boarders. Even in Marquette, which never had a significant Italian population, a similar situation existed. Antonia DePetro, whose husband was a laborer at an iron furnace, had been married for two years in 1910. She had an 11-month old daughter and took care of seven Italian boarders.

Besides maintaining the household, these women kept large vegetable gardens, chickens, cows and hogs. The animals provided surplus eggs, milk and cheese which were sold in the community. The hog was usually butchered in the fall and processed into sausage for use in the winter. During August and September the women canned hundreds of quarts of vegetables, fruit, and wild berries gathered in the vicinity, which had to last the household for the year.

Some of the women who had been seamstresses or dressmakers in the Old Country might ply their trade from their homes. When husbands died, widows continued to operate boarding houses or take in laundry. During the Depression, when times were extremely difficult, some of the women made and sold a potent distilled liquor called grappa.

Although the Italian women maintained busy schedules, they did find time to establish clubs and social organizations. Many of them were actively involved in local church groups. Others, following the lead of Italian women throughout the Upper Peninsula, established their own societies. On January 27, 1925, a group of Italian women in Negaunee came together and established the Order of the Lady
Druids, a branch of the national organization, with lodges in Bessemer and Wakefield. The women would meet and socialize at picnics, masquerades, dances, and card parties. The Lady Druids continue to exist and meet as a social organization. Similar organizations did not develop in Ishpeming and the Gwinn district. As the years passed and the women became Americanized many of them joined local lodges such as the Order of Eagles and others.

Some Italian women practiced folk medicine. They had a variety of Old Country remedies for nearly every ailment. Chamomile, an herb flower, was brewed as a tea for upset stomachs. Garlic was worn around the neck by both children and adults to ward off colds and other illnesses. Some of the women were midwives, providing invaluable assistance to physicians attending young Italian mothers.

The hundreds of Italian women who settled Marquette County helped to create a strong society. Although they did not play a public role within the community, they did maintain the home and their families, important Italian traditions. Furthermore they provided homes for many Italian miners and laborers essential to the development of the industrial base of the county.

Chapter 15
ITALIANS IN MARQUETTE COUNTY

The Iron Era The Marquette Iron Range was the first of the iron ranges to be discovered and developed in the Upper Peninsula. The history of immigration to the range is the history of the mining industry in the region. On September 19, 1844, William Burt while surveying with his party discovered iron ore in the vicinity of Negaunee. Within the next few years mining companies were formed to extract the ore, a road and then railroad were constructed connecting the mines in Negaunee and then Ishpeming with the port of Marquette which was established in 1849.

The county had no labor supply and from the beginning all of the labor needed in the mines had to be imported into the region. The first immigrants were Cornish, Irish, Germans, and French Canadians who began arriving in the summer of 1849 in Marquette. Many of them found employment in the mines which were open pits. The miners had more experience than common day laborers who merely removed the ore and thus a class distinction developed from the very beginning. In 1874 the first shaft was sunk and the underground mine became the principal means of extracting iron ore.

The first known Italian in Marquette was Eugenio Borgi who was born in Naples in 1836 and in the summer of 1860 was working as a day laborer. Also listed on the Federal census was Mary Black, a 29 year old woman from Piedmont employed as a servant. Unfortu-nately that is the only time that we hear of these two Italian immigrants.

In the summer of 1863 Philip and Josephine Marchetti arrived at Eagle Mills, east of Negaunee with a group of Irish. He was from Corsica, had migrated to the Italian mainland and worked in the Carrara marble quarries. Soon after serving in the Italian Legion during the Crimean War he migrated to the United States. By October 1860
the Marchettis were living in western Massachusetts where Philip worked on railroad tunnel construction. Their daughter Mary Ann was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1860. Although they kept their property at Eagle Mills and used it as a farm they eventually moved into Negaunee where Philip developed real estate holdings.

Another early arrival was Batista Barasa who was born in Quasolo, Italy in 1837. He worked in France and Spain with his brother on railroad tunnel construction before he migrated to Massachusetts and eventually to Negaunee in 1871. His brother Peter (b. 1842) came to the United States in 1877 and three years later was living in Negaunee. By 1873 there were other Italians in Negaunee: John Bastedo, a wagon maker and John Mazara, a laborer at the Jackson Mine. By the late 1870s Dominic Dighera was also a county resident. These and other early Italians were attracted to Marquette County through the efforts of Barasa or what is known as "chain migration:" One immigrant would arrive in a location and then sent letters which brought his friends and relatives. The area was developing and there was ample economic opportunity.

With the development of shaft mining the earlier immigrants were no longer needed on the range and most of them began moving to newly opened mining frontiers. As a result the mine operators began to seek other immigrants. The Scandinavians began to arrive in the spring of 1874 when 75 to 100 Swedes arrived. Two years later, having gotten established on the Marquette Range these immigrants moved to the newly opened iron mines on the Menominee Range because of better pay. Thus there was a demand for new laborers. In 1883 Finns were brought in for the first time and used as laborers loading iron ore from stock piles.

Although there were 41 Italians in Negaunee in 1880 it was seven years later that the first large scale migration of Italians began into the County. At first the Italians were from northern Italy: Lombardy, Piedmont, Venice and the Tyrol and they settled in Negaunee. Initially 50 Italians arrived; followed in the spring of 1888 by an additional 100. Although they inherited the jobs at the lowest end of the employment scale as trammers or iron ore shovelers, they wrote back to Italy and encouraged others to join them. In the 1890s southern Italians primarily from Calabria but also from Naples and Sicily settled in Ishpeming. They experienced a similar migration process. By 1910 Italians comprised 15% - 16% of the labor force on the Range. There were a great many Italians working as miners and in many of the mines a greater proportion of the Italians were working as laborers and trammers.

In 1910, of the 907 Italians with occupations, 741 or 81.6% were miners. There were also 51 Italians (6.1) working on the railroad, 24 or 2.8% listed as laborers, and 20 working in the iron furnaces in Marquette. Most of the Italian businessmen were located in Negaunee and Gwinn at that time. There were 16 boardinghouse keepers, 11 saloonkeepers, 5 merchants, 5 bakers and 3 shoemakers. This breakdown of occupations was consistent with other Italian communities in the Upper Peninsula. The following chart provides a complete listing of Italians and their occupations. It should be remembered that the Federal census was never completely accurate so these figures should be used conservatively.

Table 1: Locations and Occupations of Italians

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<th>Engineers</th>
<th>Furnacemen</th>
<th>Janitors</th>
<th>Laborers</th>
<th>Masons</th>
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<th>Miners</th>
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(continued on the following page)
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Politics Although it was usually atypical in other areas of the United States, the Italian immigrants in Marquette County successfully became involved in local politics. Batista Barasa who became a citizen in 1879 was elected to the Negaunee City Council when the community received its charter in 1890. Felix Chiabotto, a Negaunee merchant was elected to represent the 2nd Ward in 1897. In Ishpeming, Michael Tassin was a policeman and well-known for his efforts to get his fellow Italians to become citizens and then to vote on election day. These activities of the immigrants were unique considering that elsewhere in Michigan, Italian-Americans did not become involved in politics until the 1920s. In the late 1980s this interest in politics continues. Frank Valenti who was born in Italy serves on the county commission. Representative Dominic Jacobetti who was born in Marquette County has served in the Michigan House of Representatives since 1954 and holds the record for serving the state in public office.

Entertainment and Recreation The Italian love for music is well known. As early as 1884 the Marquette Mining Journal noted that an Italian band provided excellent dance music in Marquette County but nothing more was heard of this group. A number of Italian music teachers appeared in the various communities such as Nettie R.
Place. In the summer it provided music for picnic dances. In July 1910 it was formally organized and continued to entertain the public. In 1916 the Negaunee Star Band was led by Peter Zabotti and played social dances. In July Professor Joseph Bangiovanni’s String Orchestra was presenting "jitney dances" in Negaunee's Cleveland Park. Nine years later Joseph Violetta was the leader of the Negaunee City Band.

The most famous band in Ishpeming's history was Vampa's Band. Professor Vampa arrived in the community in 1915 and began organizing the new band. He was able to get even the most musically illiterate to read music and by January 1916 his band with thirty-four members played for the first time and was an immediate success. Vampa's Band played at the Marquette County Fair, Memorial Day and Columbus Day celebrations and at other dances and festivals given by local clubs and lodges.

Then at the peak of the band's rise to success Vampa left town for Flint and eventually Italy. In March 1919 the band was reorganized with Felix Catania of Chicago as the new director. However due to a contractual dispute Catania left Ishpeming by July. In August 1920 Vamp returned from Italy and in August 1921 the new band made its first appearance at the annual St. Rocco-St. Anthony Day festa. The band also played in local theaters, at dances and one year at the L'Anse firemen's tournament. A little later Vamp joined forces with Frank Trombley to create a short-lived symphonic orchestra with between 65 and 75 members.

The local Italians directed their entertainment and recreation toward their families. Home parties were popular with an accordion and violin or guitar providing the music on a Saturday night. During the warm summer months families organized picnics while the Italian lodges also held annual picnics. The men played bocci in backyard or saloon-side courts and got into games of morra especially for drinks in saloons. Some of the Italians fished and hunted both as recreation and also as a means of augmenting their families' food supply.

**Home Life** The first Italians who arrived on the Marquette Range were usually single men who once they got settled sent for their wives or got married. Many lived in company housing, at first, but tended to purchase their own homes when this was possible. Families took in boarders from the same village or those who were family members as a means of providing housing and also adding to the family income.

Each family maintained a garden which provided the household with much of the vegetables that the household needed during the year. Besides what was planted the women and children gathered fruits and berries and made jams and preserves from them.
If possible families kept a pig and cow. In November the pig was usually butchered and processed into sausage. It was sometimes said that every part of the pig was used except the squeal. The cow provided milk, butter and cheese for the family and if there was a surplus it was sold to customers in the vicinity. The Italian family became self-sufficient so that they usually only had to purchase items such as coffee, sugar, or olive oil. Pasta and Italian bread could be made at home but it was usually purchased.

In the late summer orders were taken for grapes and beginning in September train loads of grapes arrived at railroad sidings in Negaunee and Ishpeming. Most families made as many as 150 gallons of wine which would last them through the year. Some people would take the remaining grape skins and distill them into a potent alcoholic drink called grappa. Today a number of people make sausage from family recipes but the wine making tradition has declined because of the cost of making your own wine.

**Cultural Activities** Most of the Italian immigrants who settled on the Marquette Range were literate. As a result many of them kept in touch with the news through Italian-language newspapers. Some subscribed to papers published in New York City like the ever-popular *Il Progresso* while others read the long-lived *Il Minatore Italiano* (The Italian Miner) which was published in Laurium between 1896 and the 1930s or the transient papers such as *La Democrazione Italiana* of Hancock (1917) or *La Sentinella* (The Sentinel) published in Calumet around 1906.

In Negaunee a group of Italians organized a dramatic group. During the 1920s and 1930s the group entertained the Italian colony with popular plays produced in the Negaunee High School.

Columbus Day (October 12) was a day on which the Italians affirmed their ties with their adopted nation. From the early part of the 20th century the day has been celebrated in a variety of ways over the years. In the early days there were elaborate parades, dinners, dances and political speeches. Since Columbus Day came close to election day, politicians saw it as a good time to campaign and thus attended the festivities. Today the day continues to be celebrated with a special recognition dinner sponsored by the Loggia della Neve, Order of the Sons of Italy.

The Italian communities on the Marquette Iron Range never had their own Catholic Church. They made up a significant portion of the congregations of St. Anthony's Church in Gwinn, St. Paul's in Negaunee, and St. John's in Ishpeming. A few Italians joined some of the local Protestant churches.
Lodges and Clubs  The mutual benefical societies were a characteristic feature of all Italian communities wherever immigrants settled. At a time when there were no Social Security benefits nor unemployment or disability insurance the Italians along with other immigrants established these societies. They paid an initiation fee and then 50 cents per month. If they were sick or injured they received $1.00, their families received a benefit at death and the membership attended the funeral under pain of a severe fine.

The oldest of the Italian fraternal organization in Marquette County was Society Fratellanza e Mutuo Soccorso/Fraternal and Mutual Aid Society which was established in Negaunee in 1890 and incorporated on February 6, 1892. Within a few years it boasted over 500 members who paid $1.00 per month for illness and accident benefits and an additional $2.00 for death benefit which was collected when needed.

The biggest activity for the lodge was the annual picnic held in July or August. In early July 1910 their annual picnic was held in Cleveland Park where there was boating, swimming and athletic events, eating contests and more. A seven piece band was included in the 1915 picnic which became a common feature. During the Italo-Turkish War in 1911-1912 the lodge sent $25 to the Italian Red Cross for the widows and children of Italian soldiers killed in the fighting. Over the years the organization was active but as the immigrants died out there was no longer any interest in such an organization. On October 15, 1962 the lodge was closed and the remaining members were paid with the assets.

Over the years a number of fraternal organizations were formed in Negaunee. Society Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso Giuseppe Mazzini/Italian Mutual Aid Society, Giuseppe Mazzini was founded on June 24, 1908 with over 130 charter members. North Italians from Lombardy and Venice on September 10, 1911 established the Societa Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso Lombarda-Venetia di Negaunee/Italian Mutual Aid Society, Lombardy-Venetia of Negaunee. They were incorporated on March 15, 1912. They first met in Scandinavian Hall where they wrote their constitution. They held their annual picnic in Cleveland Park and participated in both July 4th and Columbus Day parades and celebrations. In 1912 the Society Unite Diposero was established and on September 28, 1913 Grove No. 3 of the United Order of the Druids was formed and in 1925 a women's branch was created. Both organizations are still active in Negaunee in the 1980s.

A little known organization: Alpine Italian Club flourished around 1915. There is little information concerning this lodge except that it existed and was incorporated in Marquette County.

Four of the lodges: Mazzini, Diposero, Fratellanza, and Lombardia joined in securing plots in the Negaunee cemetery. These plots were for single members without families in the community. A large monument which is still standing was surrounded by the graves of members. When these plots were no longer in demand they were sold to private individuals.

Lega Cittadina Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso, No.1/Italian Citizen League of Mutual Aid was formed in May 1918 with 50 members and incorporated on February 23, 1919. Its goal was "of having every adult Italian parentage in Marquette County duly qualified as a citizen of the United States as well as member of the League." The lodge promoted attendance at citizenship classes held in the high school by the Negaunee Board of Education and there were sick and death benefits. In 1920 two-thirds of its members were from Negaunee while the rest were from Ishpeming and North Lake and there was hope of establishing a branch in Princeton.

On September 23, 1907 the Italian colony in Princeton formed the Society Guglielmo Marconi di Mutuo Soccorso. They constructed their own hall where they held their meetings, dinners, and dances. The structure stood until the early 1980s although the society had been disbanded earlier.

The Italian community is Ishpeming established a number of lodges whose histories have been intertwined over the years. On August 6, 1899 Society di Beneficenza Italiana was established, followed on February 23, 1902 by Society Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso, Umberto I. The Society di Mutuo Soccorso, San Rocco was created on September 17, 1922 by uniting the Confraternity of San Rocco formed in 1918 and the Society di Beneficenza Italian, due to the fact that the members belonged to both lodges. The name of the Society Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso was changed to Society Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso, San Antonio di Padova on April 26, 1936. The last amalgamation of these societies took place on September 20, 1942 when the two remaining were united and renamed: Society Americana/Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso, San Roccio San Antonio di Padova. In the late 1980s the San Rocco Society as it is popularly known continues to celebrate the feast day of St. Rocco in mid-August. In the past the celebration was elaborate as witnessed in August 1943 when Frank Vallela was the chairman:

9:30 a.m. music
10:00 a.m. parade through Ishpeming to St. John's Church 11:15 a.m. High Mass, St. John's
12:30 p.m. parade through Ishpeming
2:00 p.m. public picnic with band music and events: women's nail driving contest, "coins in the pan," and the greased pole contest in which the lucky individual who reached the top won $5.00 which was placed there
7:00 p.m. Negaunee City Band
8:00 p.m. Negaunee Turners, an aerobatic and musical set 9:45 p.m. Negaunee Turners

Today the celebration continues to be held in downtown Ishpeming with the Mass, parade and less elaborate events held in the church yard. The St. Rocco Society is one of the very few original active societies in Upper Michigan and the only society with a religious orientation.

Italians from the Neapolitan community of Montefalcone in Benevento in Ishpeming formed a society of their own on June 5, 1910 which was appropriately named: Society Napoletana di Mutuo Soccaso ...Composto di Falconese. The first president was Leonardo Avella. The organization continued in existence until the early 1970s when it too was disbanded.

The Italian-American Federation of the Upper Peninsula was organized in October 1909 in Calumet. Its purpose was to unite the numerous Italian societies throughout the region and over the years a number of Marquette County societies were members. Over the years a number of its conventions were held in Negaunee and Ishpeming where there were parades and grand celebrations. However over the years interest in the organization declined and in September 1982 it was formally disbanded in Iron Mountain.

With the decline and termination of most of the old lodges a new idea was brought forth by Msgr. David Spelgatti of Ishpeming. A new organization should be organized to help preserve the Italian ethnicity which still existed in the county. In 1964 the Paisano Club of Upper Michigan was formed with the goals of commemorating, preserving and highlighting the traditions of the Italian immigrants and their American-born children. Since that time the club has flourished with branches forming in Dickinson and Gogebic Counties. In 1982 President Leonard Altobello and Msgr. Spelgatti were successful in their efforts to secure Professor Russell M. Magnaghi of Northern Michigan University to carry out the necessary research to preserve the history of the immigrant experience in Upper Michigan. As a result of this encouragement and generous financial assistance, artifacts, photographs, published and unpublished material along with 150 oral interviews on tape have been preserved. To date the Paisano Club is the only organization in the state of Michigan to conduct such an extensive research project on immigrant history.

The last of the ethnic organizations to be formed in the county was the Loggia della Neve/Lodge of the Snow of the Order of the Sons of Italy. It was established in May 1981 and is presently flourishing. It provides money for charitable organizations, scholarships and has an annual recognition dinner held in October to also commemorate Columbus Day. Thus we see that the Italian heritage in Marquette county continues to be maintained.