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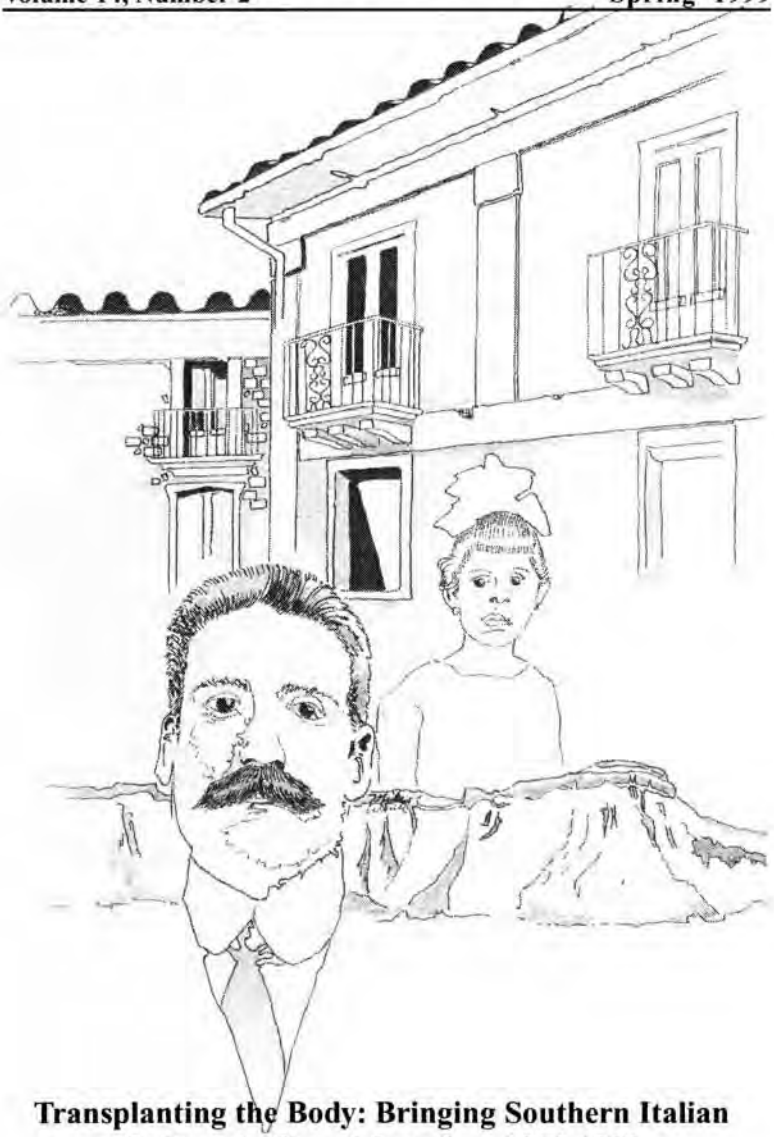

Transplanting the Body: Bringing Southern Italian Culture to Grand Junction, 1870-1930

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THE COVER: Drawing by Mike White. Mr. White attended Grand Junciton High School, graduating in 1962. He later served in the Coast Guard, and worked as a graphic artist and a carpenter. He and his wife Paula now operate their own construction company.

Contents

This picture of a picnic may have been taken at Kannah Creek. Participants are unidentified.

(Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)

Transplanting the Body: Bringing Southern Italian Culture to Grand Junction, 1870-1930.

By Sue Ann Marasco*

> Shale City [Grand Junction], as an important railway Junction, had a large number of well paid, easy-going railroad employees who, with their wives and children, dominated a considerable section of its social life...As a rule their gatherings were spicy, amorous and alcoholic, furnishing delicious conversation for the church group. They played poker with expensive zeal, dominated the Elks Lodge and contributed heavily to the success of the New Year's and Easter Monday balls.[1]

Dalton Trumbo included this paragraph in *Eclipse*, his fictionalized account of Grand Junction, Colorado, during the 1920s. This is one of the few descriptions of the Italian neighborhood that circumscribed the Grand Junction rail yard from the 1890s through the 1920s. While Trumbo wrote about the Italian neighborhood from an outsider's perspective, I will examine the lives of these Italian-Americans from their perspective, paying particular attention to how they adjusted to their new lives in the western United States. Through oral interviews, recorded largely through the efforts of the Museum of Western Colorado beginning in the late

*Sue graduated from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs in May 1999 with her Master of Arts Degree in History. She is now a Ph.D. candidate at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Sue's husband Paul Marasco is a descendant of one of Grand Junction's early Italian families.

1970s, the history of Grand Junction's Italian neighborhood can be reconstructed to reveal how these immigrants thought of themselves and their new lives in Grand Junction. Immigrants came from Italy determined to succeed. They collectively defined success as acquiring and husbanding land, building and maintaining healthy and successful families, and engaging with members of a community who also shared those goals. To Italian-Americans in Grand Junction, these three components anchored a stable and complete life. Therefore, when Dalton Trumbo defined the Italians as "easy-going," what he observed was a community celebrating its efforts to reestablish the most precious aspects of their traditional Italian culture in the American West.

This community extended from South Second Street, where Raso's Liquor store stood, to Carl Stranges's grocery store on Pitkin, to the homes that dominated South Fourth and Fifth Streets and the section southwest of the railroad tracks known as Riverside. In this neighborhood, Italian families developed a distinct enclave where they lived, worked, and sent their children to school. Amore Arcieri, who came to Grand Junction in 1913, recalled: "it was solid Italians on that [south] side of Main Street. From Colorado [Avenue] south of Grand Junction it was solid Italians."[2] While outsiders called this a "Little Italy" (as were most Italian neighborhoods throughout the United States), the residents saw nothing un-American about their neighborhood. They believed that they were adapting well to their new country: their men worked at railroad jobs, their children attended public school, they played patriotic American songs at their social gatherings, and lived very differently than they had in Italy.

However, despite adaptation, the behavior of the families was very Italian because they came predominantly from the region of Calabria in southern Italy, brought their distinctive culture with them, and used it to adapt to their new home. The people who lived near the railroad yard remembered the area as a comfortable and familiar place filled with families they knew well from villages around the town of Conflenti in Calabria. When asked about their neighborhood, Dominick Arcieri, Frank Mancuso, and Frank Simonetti began by detailing the names of the many families that lived there: Caruso, Mendicino, Roberts, Guerri, Paonessa, Stranges, Raso, Scalzo, Mendicelli, Audino, Colosimo, and many others.[3] Mary Colosimo praised the neighborhood as "a great place to raise children."[4] Likewise, Angelina Simonetti, and Frances and Susie Mendicelli remembered how safe they felt and how everyone helped one another.[5] Such memories provide the story of how Italians settled in

Grand Junction and collectively used their southern Italian cultural heritage to adjust to Colorado's Western Slope.

Historians have most often studied Italian immigrants in eastern, urban contexts, but rarely the American West. So, while the works of Leonard Covello, Oscar Handlin, and Richard Gambino offer fascinating insights into the lives of Italian immigrants, they do so largely through the lens of adjustment to an entrenched, stable, urban social landscape where they were the outsiders learning to get along within preexisting Anglo-American society.[6] However, eastern and western experiences differed. Southern Italians, for example, generally migrated from rural Italy, and rather than adjusting to an urban landscape, they found many aspects of the American West similar to their lifestyles in Italy. The West lacked the maturity that eastern cities had; consequently, the burgeoning towns and cities were societies in their infancy with fewer entrenched governmental, economic, or public institutions.[7] So, Italians arrived in some western cities still in the process of building their social networks and developing community institutions. Historian Andrew Rolle asserts that the infancy of western society lessened discrimination in the West.[8] While this point of view ignores a great deal of discrimination against many ethnic groups in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Italians generally achieved greater social, economic, and educational mobility in the West than they did in the East.[9]

Most historians generalize that Italian immigrants settled together into neighborhoods where they kept alive much of their Italian culture. Robert Orsi provided an analysis of these practices in the urban communities of New York City, and Mario Puzo's fiction chronicled the politics of the these communities.[10] The history of Italian-American communities can be analyzed through their most significant cultural practices. Such factors illuminate how immigrants anchored themselves to their heritage that provided stability for their American lives. Most important of these anchors were land ownership, family, and community cohesiveness. These three factors not only allowed Italians to survive economically, but they also provided a means to combat problems of assimilation in their new home. All this meant Italians used elements of their Old World culture to nurture their new American lives

Grand Junction's Italian community reflected both patterns. The immigrants to Grand Junction generally did find success in the American West, and they also settled together and continued communal behaviors brought from Italy. They thrived, in part, because of the specific geographical similarities between the Grand Valley, where Grand Junc-

tion is located, and Calabria, their former home in Italy.[11] Furthermore, the nascent social community in Grand Junction allowed the Italians to settle into familiar social practices without having to fight with or adjust to an entrenched white Anglo Saxon Protestant community. Consequently, instead of developing new, defensive behaviors to survive, they nurtured practices already familiar to them.

The Italian community in Grand Junction coalesced in the 1890s when the railroad provided enough employment to allow workers to save enough money to send back to Italy for their wives and children. The community grew until the Great Depression destabilized railroad jobs and many members of the community left the Grand Valley to find other work. During these forty years, Italians in Grand Junction developed definite ideas about the meaning, function, and dynamics of their neighborhood. Oral histories and stories passed from one generations to the next provide clear and human conceptions of how residents of Grand Junction's "Little Italy" remember their history. Historian Patricia Lombardo emphasized the value of this kind of testimony when she wrote that emotive evidence, such as oral histories, provides vivid impressions of what life was like: "the ideas and actions still warm with life, sparkling with the ephemeral light of what happens in the moment it happens."[12] The oral histories and interviews about the Grand Valley clearly delineated the institutions and practices that Italians in Grand Junction believed to be most important to their lives in America.

Three key institutions—family, community, and land ownership—formed the matrix of early Italian culture in Grand Junction. These three concepts were inextricably bound together. For example, "family" was more than a married couple and their offspring; it also connotated the ability of the father to own land and thereby provide for his family physically and to sustain his family through husbanding rituals that had both symbolic and practical value. Likewise, a mother's role in the family included nurturing children, maintaining a close relationship with them, making certain her family related well within the community, and eventually establishing a rapport with her children's spouses. Therefore, family, community, and land ownership sustained and nurtured the sense of being Italian-American in early Grand Junction.

Because these institutions and their related practices were at the center of the lives of these first-generation Italians, they can be appropriately labeled as cultural anchors: institutions, practices, and behaviors that strengthened the community and stabilized it. Using cultural anchors as a focal point demonstrates how these Italian immigrants

invested in creating a new home in a new land and how they oriented their thinking to inform their behaviors. Eventually, these cultural anchors became a bulwark against problems encountered in Grand Junction, such as the anti-Catholic, Ku Klux Klan activity and other outside threats to the Italian community.

When southern Italians landed on American shores, they brought with them a worldview which included well-honed survival techniques learned during periods of social and political upheaval in Italy. These immigrants knew exactly why they had left Italy and what they expected America to provide. Most of those in Grand Junction's "Little Italy" came from the southern region of Calabria, a dry and predominantly rural area located in the toe of Italy's boot. From the early Middle Ages, local governments ruled Italy, although Rome was often the center of power and wealth. Northern Italy had the most frequent contact with the rest of Europe and developed a generally wealthier and more cosmopolitan culture, while southern Italy remained insular, inward looking, and medieval long after northern Italy and the rest of Europe had embraced Enlightenment and modern ideas.[13] Consequently, even into the twentieth century, some thirteenth and fourteenth century ideals still undergirded southern Italian culture.

Part of this medieval worldview posited that society was a body in which every person played a specific role. At the top stood the local aristocrats who acted as the head (brain, mouth, eyes, and ears) of the community.[14] Much like the classic American godfather, the most powerful local aristocrat, or *padrone*, ruled the community by serving as local court, judge, administrator of justice, banker, counselor, and landlord. The village church, along with its local patron saint, functioned as the heart of the community by embodying compassion. The peasants were the hands and feet of the local body politic by working in the fields to support the *padrone* and the village saint. Reciprocally, the *padrone* protected the community from outside interference and regulated relationships in the earthly world while the Catholic faith interceded for the community with the heavenly Father.

The family replicated the structure of the community: fathers were the head and maintained the same privileges as the *padrone* within their own homes; wives were the heart of the family; and the children served as the hands and feet. Together, the family and the community operated like a body and both were only as healthy and productive as its interrelated parts. This medieval social organization, therefore, demanded

that everyone must fulfill a specific role and understand their rights and responsibilities to those around them.[15]

A hundred years of warfare, political upheaval, and unification under a government centered in Rome in the 1870s undermined stability and local authority, and would eventually motivate many in Southern Italy to emigrate to America.[16] The South suffered greatly in the turmoil of the nineteenth century as the countryside became a battleground among local guerrillas, entrenched *padrones*, and invading forces.[17] After centuries of local control, the South resisted giving up their local, autonomous social structure. After unification, distrust of northerners grew because the distant central government demanded new taxes from the South to pay for the war, passed new laws, and sent military troops south to enforce them. Unification thereby caused *padrones* to lose their local control, and caused everyone in the South to suffer under a heavy tax burden. Local churches despaired when officials in Rome sent northern priests south to enforce the collection of tithes and to sell off church land formerly used to support the poorest members of each community.[18] Such practices destroyed centuries-old systems of relief for the poor, and estranged local parishioners who discontinued tithing altogether and otherwise refused to support these alien clerics.[19] By the 1870s, southern Italy endured the consequences of nearly one hundred years of turmoil and inured the North's arbitrary rule.

During these tumultuous times, Southern culture remained tied to its traditional relationships; however, the expectations for justice, beneficial agency on the part of *padrones*, and local autonomy eroded. What remained was a supreme lack of national patriotism and distrust of central government. By weakening the local *padrones* without increasing consistent law enforcement, and providing no effective system for ensuring justice and social welfare, unification created opportunities for new and nefarious groups. Illegal organizations, such as the Black Hand, and corrupt government officials exploited the power vacuums in local and national government. Using guerrilla tactics, the Black Hand preyed primarily on small landowners who could not afford weapons, bodyguards, and the money to bribe the corrupt officials to intercede on their behalf.[20] Thus, instead of a medieval body with one head, the southern political structure, beginning in the 1870s, resembled a many-headed hydra, with the local *padrones*, the Black Hand, the official northern government, and its many corrupt officials all victimizing the people of the South. Wherever the common people turned, they found someone or

some organization demanding money: tax collectors from Rome, a representative from the Black Hand, a *padrone* wanting repayment on a loan, or a government official expecting a bribe. The instability of southern Italy affected society from the top to the bottom. Southern Italy's culture unraveled. The tight, interwoven system that had kept it together for so many generations came undone.

To many caught in this impossible situation, emigration seemed the only means of escape; consequently, Italians immigrated to Spain, France, and other areas in Europe, while others placed their hopes in America.[21] Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, Italians saw various forms of propaganda about North America and the possibilities that it offered: "freedom of worship, of education, and of the press; absolute economic independence, with unregulated competition, the rights of inheritance, a free course for the play of supply and demand; and, above all, the absence of a dominant political caste."[22] In the 1880s, performance troupes from America, like Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, emphasized the youth of and abundance in the American West.[23] Such images appealed to Italians who felt burdened by the country's lack of opportunity for social or economic advancement. As the century progressed, those who had traveled to America corroborated the idea that the New World meant wealth because they returned with a newfound confidence, money to buy land, and luxuries like jewelry and leather shoes.[24] In the United States, it appeared, a person could make money, and regain a sense of power and control. As a result, many men planned to leave for America, earn money there, and then return to Italy and buy land and reestablish the social positions they had lost after unification.[25]

Upon arriving in America, most men recorded a vocation upon their entry.[26] However, at this time America needed unskilled labor, not craftsmen, so most Italians were recruited into coal mining, steel production, and railroad industries.[27] Many who settled in Grand Junction had stopped first in New York, Philadelphia, and Canada, but had come to the Rocky Mountain area primarily because of the jobs available in railroad construction.[28] Like many western railroads, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company wanted to hire and retain good workers to complete their western lines.[29] Through recruitment and advertisements in the East, the Denver and Rio Grande promised good pay and steady work.[30] Such opportunity caused Italians to write home about the employment available in the West.[31] When construction of the railway between Gunnison, Colorado, and Salt Lake City, Utah, began in ear-

nest in 1882, many Italian workers saw the Grand Valley for the first time. It appeared a utopia. What more could a place offer than a mild climate, two rivers to supply water for irrigation, and a bounty of inexpensive farmland in this sparsely populated area?[32]

The railroad which the Italians helped to build created something of a boom in Grand Junction. At first, the town consisted of an aggregation of adobe homes and log cabins clustered near Main Street; however, the coming of the railroad opened the Grand Valley to settlers from all over the state and country.[33] By 1890, Grand Junction needed workers of all kinds—men to dig irrigation canals, mine coal, build roads, plant fruit trees, and harvest the crops from the orchards.[34] Most significantly, the railroad opened a roundhouse and machine shop in Grand Junction to service coal-driven engines on their treks to Salt Lake City.[35] The establishment of the roundhouse meant workers could settle permanently in one place instead of constantly moving along with the construction of the railroad.[36]

This opportunity for permanent settlement coincided with another transformation within the Italian community. While the original goal for many men had been to earn money and return to Italy, now these Italians began to see residence in America as more desirable than returning to an Italy still rife with political, social, and economic problems.[37] Dominick Arcieri remembered the attitude of these first families: "When they realized that they were living better here, they went back to get family and settle here....I am glad we came to America because we have done better here than we would have in Italy"[38] Grand Junction offered not only steady employment, but the opportunity for land ownership and social stability. By purchasing real estate, and sending home for their wives and children, the Italians who settled in Grand Junction made a conscious decision to become American citizens. They came to believe that reclaiming what they cherished about the life would be more possible in America than in thier homeland.[39]

Italian men who worked on the railroad often saved their money. Joseph Peep remembered his dad's strategy. He lived with two other men who made $1.35 a day. At the end of the day, they threw a dollar in a hat for savings and lived off the remaining thirty-five cents.[40] Such frugal habits resulted in nest eggs that facilitated the purchase of land, and money for boat and train tickets for family members back in the old country. Often, the men purchased houses first, and then sent for family members. Others, such as Frank Mancuso, boarded with another Italian

Picnics were occasions to celebrate community solidarity and the prosperity possible in the New World. Amore Raso is in the center with his glass raised. His wife Raffelina Raso is to his left with a white kerchief on her head, Mr. (Eugene or Alfonso) Mendicino is behind her right shoulder, and behind her left shoulder is Violet (Cenza) Roberts next to her husband Gil Roberts. The rest of the people are unidentified.

(Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)

family until his father could purchase a house.[41] Either way, home ownership and the arrival of family members often occurred simultaneously and signaled the beginning of a new life in America.

Land ownership established the first and most fundamental cultural anchor for Italians. They expressed its importance through the phrase, "*chi ha prato ha hutto*" or "he who has land, has everything."[42] The concept of land as "everything" obviously meant much more than a deed on a piece of property. Owning productive land meant growing food for the family, renting parts of it out for income, or selling farm produce for cash. However it was used, land helped a family sustain itself and avoid debt. Moreover, land ownership in the Grand Valley was a more secure investment than it was in Italy. Two Grand Junction families, the Stranges and the Arcieris passed down the same didactic tale relating the instability of private property in Italy. Like many wives, Rosa Arcieri remained in Italy while her husband worked for the railroad in Colorado. A woman alone, with at least two small children, Rosa held agricultural land. Somewhere around 1912, the Black Hand threatened this land. Her eldest son Dominick related:

> They sent her a letter with a black hand stamped inside the letter demanding five thousand lyre, or one thousand dollars in American money or they would destroy our property. My mother refused to meet their demands...I [then] walked about three miles from the town to our property. Sure enough, the Black Hand had carried out their threats. They cut all our fruit trees and destroyed our vineyard. Mother started to cry and I knew her heart was broken. When she saw all the damage they had done to us, it was a terrible shock. Finally, with tears in her eyes she said, 'Dominick, we are going to America,' and we did.[43]

Stephen Stranges, grandson of Dominck's cousin related the same story. This account is significant because it has been passed down as the cause for these families' break with Italy. This story indicates how the loss of land severed the connection to Italy. Shari Raso remembered that her grandfather Amore Raso was obsessive about acquiring land: "Land was the thing, to an extreme actually. He liked it so much he did not want his kids to sell it when he died."[44] Arcieri's story of the

Black Hand and Amore Raso's obsession with land acquisition demonstrate the importance of owning property as an anchor of stability for the Grand Junction Italians. Losing land precipitated the break between Italians and their homeland, and buying it in Grand Junction bound them to their new country.

Owning land thus became a primary objective for Italian immigrants in Grand Junction because it symbolized independence from life's vicissitudes, and offered instead a solid, secure, and unchanging place for a family to live and grow. Historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie argued that the meaning of land signified much about the meaning of home, family, and the personal relationships that took place within this private and intimate setting.[45] This concept of land then included more than the physical boundaries of a piece of earth and buildings—it also included the food crops and the flowers grown on it, the meals provided by the garden, the bread baked in its hearth, and the health and well-being of the family members supported by its produce. Distinguished rose arbors indicated that the land was so bountiful that valuable garden space could be used for purely aesthetic plants. Therefore, the importance of land extended from the outer reaches of the property lines, through the tomato plants, rose bushes, and into the canned goods in the basement, the dinner on the table, and the health of family members enjoying the meal.

While land and houses represented security, Italians in Grand Junction also saw them as places of production rather than just as symbols of what labor could buy. Purchasing a house marked the beginning; making it and the land around it productive year after year was the real achievement. In the late-nineteenth century, many mainstream Americans embraced the Victorian ideals of ornate interiors with separate parlors and dining rooms as a necessary part of architectural style.[46] While southern Italians appreciated decorative interiors, they saw a home's primary value to be an enclave for cooking, baking, and raising children. Furthermore, they preferred smaller homes as a way to maximize land. Consequently, the first generation of immigrants kept homes small and utilitarian. Susie Mendicelli recalled: "everybody earned a little money and bought a little house—not the best, but not the worst either."[47] Likewise, Angelina Simonetti remembered her mother's house, and then her own, as small with just "the basics."[48] As the years progressed, the homes became more and more a reflection of American culture; however, investment in land remained the primary goal for Ital-

ian families, and they kept the purchased luxury items to a minimum so they could acquire more land and make the family and community more stable.[49]

In his book, *Blood of My Blood*, Richard Gambino related that the first activity for southern Italians, after buying property, was to turn up the soil and plant a garden.[50] Planting and tending gardens around their houses was an essential part of land ownership. However small the house remained in that first generation, the gardens brimmed with vegetables, fruit, and flowers, particularly roses. These fragrant and colorful plants provided decoration for the home. Significantly, while women worked inside their utilitarian homes, gardens were the men's domain. These men worked twelve hour days, seven days a week, for the railroad, but considered tending the garden a serious duty because their ability to nurture a garden symbolized how well they could care for their family.[51] A bountiful garden ensured a well-stocked cellar of canned goods for the winter. Beautiful flowers symbolized a man's ability to provide more than just the essentials for survival. Therefore, raising roses was more than a hobby; it reflected on a man's success as husband, father, and provider for his family.[52] Land ownership functioned as a cultural anchor, which provided a physical place of safety and allowed the family to reconstruct their individual and collective roles in the house and garden.

Home, the bounty of the garden, the production of food, and consuming that food were symbols and symbolic acts related to successful land ownership for southern Italians. Meals and food represented more than feeding a family and helping children grow strong bodies. Eating in America was different than it had been in Italy, and meals became one of the most cherished aspects of life in the Grand Valley.[53] In these immigrants' minds, southern Italy represented hunger. In the Old Country, there was little left to eat after the crops were sold, leaving much of southern Italy undernourished. The region could not feed itself and depended on food imports to sustain its population. [54] Lunches in many villages consisted of red peppers, fried in olive oil, on course, dark bread. Dinners offered much the same contents, with the possible addition of goat cheese or a "carefully crushed tomato."[55] By the early-twentieth century, cooking became more complicated because wood was at a premium as large-scale lumber extraction deforested much of the landscape.[56] With food and wood scarce, good food and high quality meals had become rare in Italy.

In America, on the other hand, markets brimmed with white flour, fresh meat and vegetables. Mainstream Americans' nonchalance

about the abundance of food shocked and appalled many Italians.[57] Frank Mancuso, for example, commented: "we can make anything in this country and we throw it all away."[58] Italians took food preparation seriously. Bringing ample amounts of food to the table was treated as an honor, if not a sacred occasion.[59] Women usually prepared meals, although men were not forbidden to help. Like taking care of the land, skillful cooking symbolized a family's health and prosperity. Shari Raso recalled that her grandfather praised the beauty of Anglo-American women, but abhorred their cooking.[60] Amore Arcieri prided himself on his cooking skills and doubted that any non-Italian woman could ever learn the importance of food preparation.[61] Both men spoke for their fellow countrymen by saying that mainstream Americans did not understand and appreciate the cultural meaning of food preparation in an Italian household. Every house needed a good cook who understood the nuances and interconnectedness of land ownership, gardening, cooking, and the sacred nature of eating.

Food and the tasks associated with it reached outside the home and involved members of the larger community. Butchering, for example, often became a communal activity. Friends came to assist with the slicing and sawing, grinding meat for sausage, and the production of items such as lard and soap. This process—like sumptuous meals—reflected prosperity in the New World. This contrasted favorably with Italy, where meat was so scarce that families often shared what was available.[62] In America, Italians proudly bought whole hogs and regarded this act as a celebration of their material success. Susie Mendicelli began her description of making spiced, smoked sausage with the observation that Italians truly appreciated eating good meat after having so little of it in Italy.[63] Doing one's own butchering also represented independence and safety from exploitation by outsiders. Frank Mancuso remembered that the Italians bought ice cream from a man who also sold meat out of his wagon; however, none of the Italians would buy it fearing that it was actually dog meat. Butchering their own animal allayed these fears because the Italians said they "knew what we were eating."[64] On a practical level, doing one's butchering allowed them to keep and use every part of the carcass. Storing the bundled skeins of sausage with other preserved products in cold cellars assured people that there was an ample supply of food for the winter or in case of emergency.

Because many southern Italians found it nearly impossible to get high quality grain or a quantity of firewood in Italy, it is not surpris-

ing that bread baking took on new significance in America. Making bread was a complicated, time-consuming process, which began with building a wood fire in a brick oven specifically designed for bread baking.[65] Even after gas ovens became a standard feature in their kitchens, Italian women in Grand Junction continued to bake bread in these wood-fired ovens located in their back yards.[66] Frances Mendicelli remembered the process of building the fire and discerning when the brick ovens reached the right temperature.[67] Both Mary Colosimo and Amore Arcieri remembered taking down the "number three wash tubs "and kneading twenty-five pounds of flour at a time. The process of kneading and rising took many hours and Mary remembered getting up as early as four in the morning to begin the process. Bread baking took place once a week. Several extra loaves were preserved "in a crock" of heavy earthenware to protect them from the damp air of the cellar. [68]

Families shared freshly baked bread with the other Italians in the neighborhood. Because families did not bake bread on the same day, not only was the smell of the oven-baked bread wafted through the neighborhood most mornings, but families enjoyed fresh baked bread almost everyday. Therefore, even though Amore Arcieri remembers "kneading the goddamn bread" in the huge tub once a week, sharing meant receiving fresh baked loaves daily. Exchanging bread symbolized the Italian community's increased wealth and prosperity. Not only was land ownership an important factor of stability, but the land's productivity made this kind of communal sharing a celebration of prosperity.

Sharing food became especially important during special holidays, particularly Christmas. Desserts were usually difficult to make, so a successful batch of the fried and honey-dipped delicacies, scalilles, the fragile, anise-flavored pizzelles, and other complicated delicacies attested to a family's comfortable lifestyle and a cook's expertise in the kitchen.[69] Sharing food symbolized much about life in America. It cemented friendships, affirmed that the family income and productivity of its land had produced enough of a surplus that they could give food away, and it also attested to an Italian woman's prowess in the kitchen. Sharing food in Grand Junction differed significantly from what had occurred in Southern Italy. In the Old Country, sharing was a rather grim necessity for survival in an environment where shortages, not surpluses, were typical.

The southern Italian concept of community reflected medieval ideas of a society acting like the interconnected parts of a body, as well as the realization that working together was a survival technique that had helped stretch limited resources. Particularly since the Italian wars

in the nineteenth century, southern Italians developed a deep distrust of outside authority and a dependence on community practices to provide justice and relief for local problems. In coming to America, with its foreign system of government and social institutions, the social conventions developed in Italy remained essential to helping Italians survive in their new home. Therefore, creating effective community networks made appeals to outside authority unnecessary.

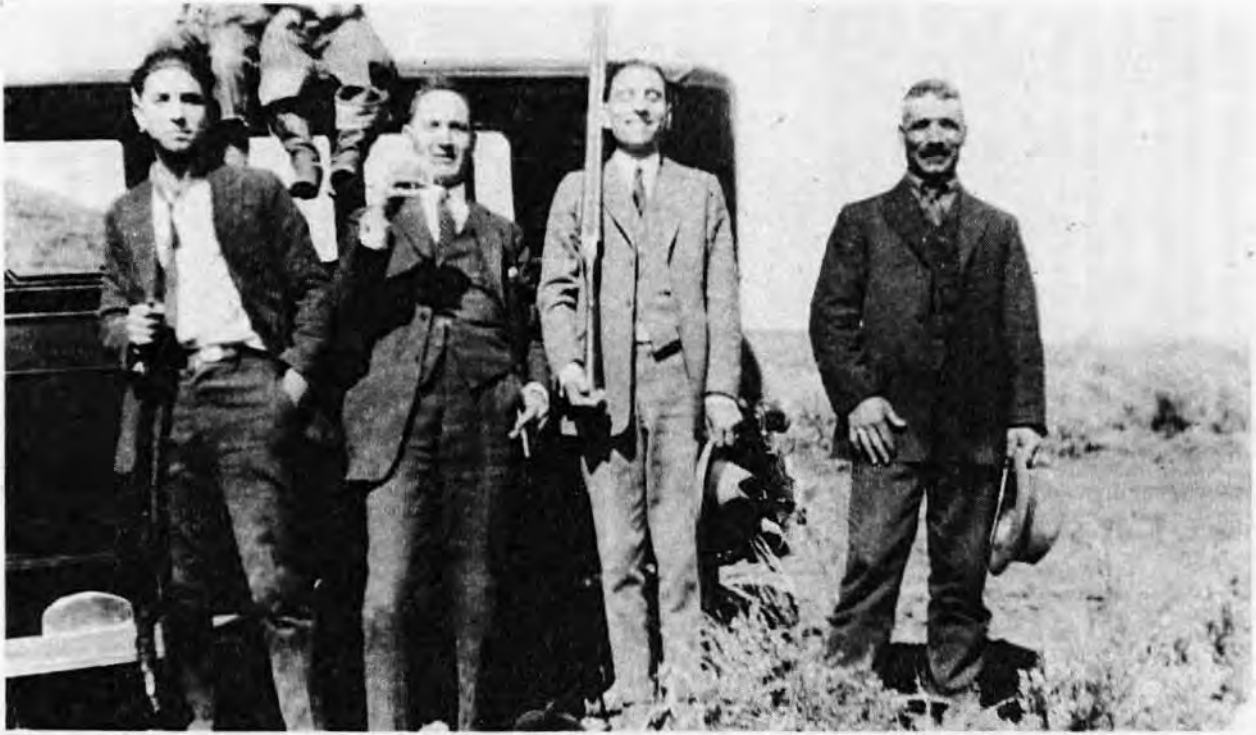
A sense of community identity developed quickly in Grand Junction's "Little Italy." Settling together in their own neighborhood south of Main Street contributed to this. In addition, thinking of themselves as a distinct group came easily because many of the families came from the town of Conflenti.[70] Early immigrants like Carl Stranges, (Vincenzo) James Arcieri, and Amore Raso settled in Grand Junction after traveling as far north as Canada. When they finally sent for their families, they also established that Grand Junction was a good place to settle. When other families arrived, these first families helped in getting railroad jobs and providing a place to stay until the newcomers could buy land. The point was to help these new arrivals adjust to their new surroundings and get a start in the neighborhood, not with handouts, but with information and accommodations. For example, the Petrofesso family had the only phone on South Fourth Street and Dominick Arcieri recalls that the Petrofessos allowed fellow Italians access to the phone; however, Italian custom required that they give the family the nicest, largest, or even an extra loaf of bread or some other form of gratuity in return for the use of the phone. Such reciprocity strengthened the community structure and meant that that these Italian immigrants would not "owe" favors to anyone outside their community.[71]

Originating from the same area of Italy helped maintain cohesion in the community. In Italian, the term *paesano* denoted people of the same country or the same town, but also connoted something akin to family member.[72] Reflecting the idea of the medieval body, *paesano* also meant a fellow member of the village "body," further emphasizing the interdependence of community members. Therefore, when newly arrived immigrants needed money, a place to stay, or other services (like the telephone), appealing to a fellow *paesano* was like appealing to a brother, sister, uncle, or even father. And, like appealing to a close relative, it was assumed that a *paesano* would act like a family member by helping. Everyone knew that those who received help were duty bound to repay their "debt" by helping others.[73] These reciprocal behaviors

among families reflected the tradition of the medieval body that encouraged the community to behave as an independent entity. Furthermore, the long history in Italy of inconsistent and even antagonistic relationship between southern Italians and the official Italian government also bolstered the idea that individuals and families should not look outside their immediate community for assistance.

Because he was an early immigrant who became a successful businessman and could communicate effectively with Anglo-American society, Amore Raso became the leader in Grand Junction's Italian community. Many new immigrants approached him for loans of money, assistance with their immigration papers, and help sending money back to their families in Italy. Within a few years of opening his successful grocery and liquor store, Amore became the community *padrone*; however, because the term *padrone* referred specifically to an Italian aristocrat born into that position who rented land to peasants, the Italians in Grand Junction referred to Amore as *compare*, or godfather. Regardless of the popular connotation of the word godfather, southern Italians made it clear that this term did not imply any Mafia connections. In fact, southern Italians who settled in Grand Junction hated the Mafia, or Black Hand in Italy, and wanted nothing to do with this organization in the New World.[74] As *compare*, Raso used his acquired skills and capital to serve as ambassador to the larger American society. Instead of being born as the "head" of his community, Raso earned the respect of his community through his personal initiative, enabling him to assume a place of honor with the consent of his *paesani*.[75] Because he spoke the English language well, and made money in his business, he could provide Italians with many services they could not access themselves. Angelina Simonetti commented that "if someone had problems, [or] had to go to court, well, he'd help them. In them days, people were illiterate. They had to have somebody to take care of him and who was going to do it? Well, he could do it."[76] Angelina's comment is significant because she asserted that the community expected and needed a "head" for its medieval structure and Raso accepted that responsibility.

Raso rose to prominence because of his grocery store stocked with a wide range of imported oil, cheese, pasta, and olives. This alone would have endeared him to the Italians because of the symbolism and importance of food. After becoming financially secure, Raso also became the community banker. Because of a long-held distrust of public institutions, few Italians used the city bank.[77] When Italians wanted to



Dressed in suits and drinking from wine glasses, a day of shooting in the desert is treated as a formal occasion among gentlemen. From left to right: Fred Marasco, Amore Raso, Joseph Cerra, and Bernardo Marasco.

(Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)

send money back to Italy, needed loans, or tickets for trips back and forth to Italy, Amore Raso could help. Frank Simonetti Sr. recalled: "Every Italian [In Grand Junction] owed him money at one time or another."[78] Raso even advertised his services on the calendars he had printed for his grocery store. In English Raso advertised "general merchandise, grocery and meats," and on the same calendar he advertised in Italian, "sending money to all parts of the world, travel agent: ocean and railroad, Notary Public," as well as "importer of macaroni, cheese, oil."[79] Raso kept two non- Italian lawyers on retainer to take care of legal problems like immigration papers.[80]

Raso charged for his services and expected interest back on his loans, but he provided access to services that helped keep resources within the community.[81] Interest on loans, profit from grocery sales, and payment for services made Raso wealthy and strengthened his power in the community, but also meant that he had more money to loan to other Italians. Amore Arcieri remembered the extent of Raso's resources because Raso took him into a back room of the store: "he had more money [there] than the United States Bank. I am not kidding you. You should have seen the bills stacked. Christ! I bet there was a million dollars in there."[82] Regardless of the actual amount Arcieri observed, Raso's resources meant that the Italian community need not depend on outsiders. Put simply, Raso's wealth kept the Italian community strong by enhancing its wealth, power, and viability.

The first generation of Italians remembered Amore Raso as a man worthy of the community's respect. Amore Arcieri characterized him as a kind man who always dressed well and was exceedingly polite: "when he took a walk and met people, he always tipped his hat.... To a lady, he always tipped his hat. He always spoke to them. I'll never forget that."[83] Furthermore, as one of the few Italians to own a car, he shared it by taking friends out to shoot at targets in the desert north of Grand Junction. In the summertime, when the temperatures soared, he sponsored excursions south of town to Kannah Creek for community picnics and gatherings in cooler and shadier places.[84] He understood his responsibility to share his good fortune with the rest of the community. In doing all of these things, Amore Raso filled a role in Italian society that went back to medieval times. He was the *compare*, or head, of the community. In keeping with that position, he remained respectful of the *paesani* and honored the concept of reciprocity by sharing his good fortune with his Italian neighbors in Grand Junction.

While Raso provided help outside of the railroad industry, workers on the railroad also helped newly arrived immigrants get jobs. Frank Chiodo remembered that getting a job had a lot to do with whom you knew.[85] Once on the job, Italian men developed strong networking skills. Cultural solidarity formed as Italians labored together in railroad crews, often under an Italian foreman.[86] Since promotions were often based on written exams, and most Italians in this first generation could not read or write in English, they remained laborers. Some Italians did take the exams, and in many instances the men studied together and helped one another even when they were testing for the same positions.[87]

Women also developed a sense of community. Because their husbands were laborers, they faced night shifts, day trips, and even weeklong excursions. Railroad wives often helped each other cope with their husbands' varying schedules. While railroad workers were insured for medical emergencies from 1889 on, they had to visit railroad doctors and hospitals for treatment.[88] Grand Junction workers were taken to a hospital over two hundred miles away in Salida, Colorado, which meant wives and children could be left for any number of days during medical treatment.[89] Therefore, many aspects of railroad work, such as language problems and injury, encouraged and strengthened support structures within the community.

Grand Junction's "Little Italy" also shared the Catholic faith that functioned as a pillar in their community structure. It is important to remember, however, that Italians had a complicated relationship with the official Catholic Church in Rome. Its hierarchy had become entangled in the affairs of the Italian state and had sent interloping priests into the South to enforce tithing laws.[90] These events soured southern Italians on the organized Church, even though they remained devoted to the tenets of their faith, their saints, God, and their own spirituality. In Grand Junction, church services, rosary societies, baptisms, first communions, marriages, religious holidays, and even funerals remained rituals that celebrated community cohesion much more than adherence to church authority.[91] Baptisms and marriages produced significant celebrations. The choice of godparents for a newborn cemented ties between families. Godparents assumed significant responsibilities—caring for the child if the parents died, exemplifying a proper Christian lifestyle, and remembering to keep their godchildren in daily prayer.[92] In his book *The Paesanos*, Jo Pagano explained that Italian immigrants often asked those who had helped them the most upon their arrival from

Italy to serve as godparents of their children.[93] Designating someone as a godparent conferred compliments: it showed appreciation, and designated recipients as so honorable and financially secure that they could be trusted with the well being of the couple's children. Amore Raso and his wife Raffelina stood as godparents for many of the children born to this first generation. Many children, including Amore Arcieri, Raffelina Mendicino and Roland Marasco were named after Amore, Raffelina and their children.[94] These symbolic rituals strengthened and affirmed connections between families and encouraged the *paesani* to remain intimately connected through familial and kinship ties.

Weddings and funerals were likewise laden with symbols of relationships among families and the community. These carefully orchestrated events involved gift-giving and office-filling obligations (such as bridal attendants or funeral pallbearers). The celebrations that followed these events were open to everyone in the community and often lasted for several days.[95] Susie Mendicelli recalled that these parties would go on and on, with food and drink flowing freely in the streets of the neighborhood or at Whitman Park, located at near center of the community between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Susie Mendicelli remembered that Italian musicians often played the *Stars and Stripes* on mandolins and other instruments brought from Italy.[96] Carnival, the last week before the beginning of Lent, Christmas Eve, and the Monday after Easter were religious celebrations that occasioned enthusiastic parties. Likewise, rosary societies, participation in the choir, and other church-related activities connected members in the community through weekly parish gatherings.[97] Therefore, while religious devotion constituted an important aspect of Italians' private lives, the church also had secular functions. It was the catalyst that brought the community together to celebrate, cement, and maintain symbolic relationships among the first generation of Italians.

While church fostered community interconnectedness, it also reminded people of their shared ties to Italy. Family members who remained in the Old Country also helped bind the Italian-Americans together. Sharing news from Italy was an important community event. Frances Mendicelli remembered that people gathered at each other's homes after church to read family letters from Italy.[98] Many children and grandchildren of these first generation immigrants recalled how stories about Italy at these gatherings reinforced the community's reasons for leaving Italy permanently. During these occasions, Susie Mendicelli

heard how lucky she was to live in "the land of plenty," and was constantly reminded of the poor conditions in Italy where even the most industrious people barely survived.[99] People in Grand Junction sent money home to Italy, and that also linked Grand Junction and Calabria. Even loyalty to the patron saints in hometown villages remained important. For example, when Amore Raso's son Roland became deathly ill, Raso prayed to *Maria SS, Della Quercia Di Visora* (the Virgin of the Oaks), the patron saint of his hometown of Conflenti. When Roland recovered, Amore Raso purchased new crowns of gold for the Virgin's statue in Italy and the Christ child carried in her arms.[100] Through such transatlantic relationships, the Italian community in Grand Junction continually reaffirmed both the importance of reciprocal relationships and their reasons for remaining in the United States.

The reciprocal relationships and their obligations created a delicate and intricate balance of power that was easily upset and the complicated social relationships that bound the Italian community together sometimes broke down. Because these relationships were so important to the proper functioning of a community, the consequences for breaking the rules was necessarily severe. Broken agreements, unreciprocated favors, and affronts to the community hierarchy could spark passionate feuds among individuals and their respective families. While the details of these feuds differed, they generally served to compel the offending party to acknowledge a breach in conduct and then symbolically or actually make amends to the injured person or family.[101] If the apology and the reparation did not occur, the offender could find himself or herself permanently alienated from the community. While families in Grand Junction did feud, perhaps Jo Pagano's description of a feud within his own family best illustrates how involved disagreements became. In his book, *The Golden Wedding*, Pagano explained that his brother refused to apologize for challenging his father's authority over the home and the family, so Jo's brother had to leave the house. Furthermore, he lost monetary support and his name could no longer be spoken in the Pagano home.[102] Such occurrences punished the son and provided powerful lessons to the younger children about the consequences of challenging established authority. Similarly, such ostracism could transpire within the community if a family or a family member offended a godparent or another family by failing to acknowledge their generosity or superior social standing.

Since feuds could rent families and communities, people worked hard to end them.[103] Women often became the conciliators between of-

fended parties. In Jo Pagano's family, his mother pleaded with both father and son to mend their differences and remained demonstrably distraught over the feud. Jo's father became silent about the argument, but Jo's mother kept the situation in the forefront by remaining despondent and vocal about the quarrel.[104] Everyone knew that feuds disrupted families and weakened community structure, so usually everyone tried to find a way to end them and restore the sense of unity so vital to the continuance of a viable community.

The Italian immigrants in Grand Junction functioned with considerable autonomy; however, Italians accessed services, like doctors, dentists, and lawyers from the larger Grand Junction community. Therefore, the Italians did not insulate themselves from the larger non-Italian community as much as give priority to the health of the ethnic neighborhood. If possible, Italians relied on each other for help and maintained rituals and relationships that strengthened the community and encouraged monetary autonomy. Along with the independence through land ownership, a strong community structure helped them prosper in Grand Junction.

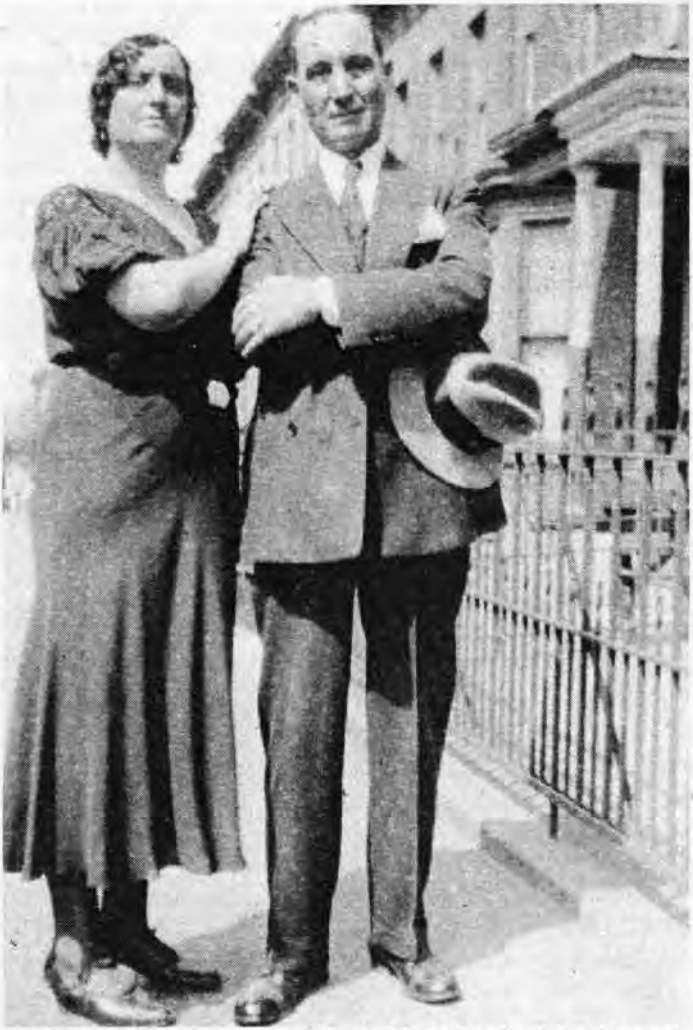
Supplementing land ownership and a strong sense of community, family was the third, and probably the most important, of Italian-Americans' cultural anchors. Like other social institutions, the relationships in the home had been disrupted in southern Italy. The ideal home consisted of a man who supported a wife devoted to the house and children. However, the political disruptions in nineteenth-century Italy forced families to deviate from this ideal. Economic hardships meant families paid more taxes and received less from their crops; fathers worked harder, women joined men in the fields, and children began to go to work earlier.[105] Furthermore, when men left for the United States, women often became the heads of households. All of this undermined men's authority in the culture.[106]

America and financial success provided the foundation for rebuilding the patriarchal relationships within the household. Italians of this age believed that a strong male figure had to be the locus of the family. Jo Pagano explained, "a family without a father is a family without a center."[107] Fathers were the breadwinners, the negotiators with the outside world, and the symbol of financial and social positions. In Italy men—particularly those with wealth and social status—were to remain dignified. In his time in the Calabrian village of Gagliano, Carlo Levi recalled that dusk brought out the aristocratic men of the village: si-

lently they came and sat by the village well, smoking pipes in the fading daylight and speaking in low voices and nearly indistinguishable from the sound of the wind.[108] This contrasted sharply with the bubbling sounds of women as they came to the same well every morning gesturing with great animation.[109] Many of the children and grandchildren of these first generation Italian men remember these patriarchs as strong, but silent. Roland Marasco characterized his father Bernard as a "hard [working], honest, loving man," but the more "passive" of the two parents.[110] Stephen Stranges remembers his grandfather Antonio Stranges as a solitary man.[111] As men regained their patriarchal roles in Grand Junction, the more likely they were to act as the strong, silent anchors of respectability expected of men in Italy.

While men brought money and social status to a family, wives were the undeniable managers of the home. When men left to work in America, the women who remained behind ran the households in Italy. Dominick Arcieri's story about his mother's encounter with the Black Hand indicates the extent of the responsibilities women assumed in their husband's absence. Such work stigmatized a woman as unattractive physically or a poor domestic manager who could not attract a man to provide for her.[112] So, when women joined their husbands in America, they returned to a traditional, comfortable, and stable domestic situation.

Because most of the women who arrived in Grand Junction were married, or would be soon after their arrival, the Italian community had few single women of marriageable age. Therefore, the Italian community reflected the ideal of women as mothers and wives.[113] Good married women were excellent housewives, cooks, morally unreproachable, shrewd money managers, and superior regulators of the intricate social network of the community. Women's responsibilities reached outside of the home in many regards. Grocery shopping took women into local markets, and while these first-generation women could continue to speak their native tongue in grocery stores owned by Italians, they did have to learn the value of goods at the market and how to negotiate the best price using American money.[114] Furthermore, a woman who needed products available only outside the Italian community had to make social connections to facilitate the transaction without paying too much or buying substandard items. Subsequently, to be a successful Italian-American wife during these years, a woman had to be assertive, learn about money, and master the art of shopping. Few Italians remem-



A picture of Italian womanhood: The man in this picture is Diamante Raso, Amore's brother. The woman is unidentified, but most likely his sister or cousin. While this picture was taken in Brooklyn, NY, the woman in the picture perfectly represents Italian womanhood. Her proud chin and erect posture demonstrate her strength of character, pride, and determination. Simultaneously, her position beside, but slightly behind Diamante, and her hand on his shoulder reveal her position as a support for, not equal to, the man in the picture. (Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)

bered their mothers or grandmothers as timid women. Like many, Mary Colosimo remembered that her Italian mother-in-law ran her house and ruled her children with an iron fist.[115]

Child rearing had to be adjusted to American realities as women learned what skills their children needed to become successful in their new country. Roland Marasco remembers that his mother was "a driven woman," who demanded that her children excel. Primary on her agenda was to see all of her children educated to secure professions: "I think she decided that we were all going to college and that we were all going to be doctors." As her children grew, Maria Guesepa Marasco used a firm hand to remind them of their goals. According to Roland, his father never laid a hand on his children, but his mother certainly did![116]

Mothers endeavored to keep their children within the community and to instill a sense of moral responsibility in them. Encouraging children to stay close to home served to strengthen both the family's social standing and the economic success of the community as a whole. Mary Colosimo's mother in-law not only insisted that Mary and her husband Charlie live with them, but prevented Mary and Charlie from moving to Utah to take another job on the railroad.[117] Mothers insisted that their children behave properly in the community. Children learned early to respect their place in the hierarchy of the community and understand that their behavior reflected on the family. Parenting, therefore, involved passing on to their children an understanding of the long-held and subtle beliefs from southern Italy about how individuals related to the community.

Fathers demonstrated to their children the masculine ideal of financial independence and the dignity that came with monetary success. Mothers instilled the skills that would make such success possible through schooling and moral education. Together these practices inculcated the goal of financial autonomy and the skills to cope with the outside world, while encouraging strong emotional ties and responsibility toward the family and community. Economically successful children were the ultimate symbol of a family's success, and it is little wonder that Italian-American households held their children to such high expectations.[118]

Children's first contact with the larger world began when they entered school. Many had received some schooling in Italy, but most entered Grand Junction's Lowell, Emerson, and later Riverside Elementary, knowing little, if any, English. The grade school experience left indelible memories. Angelina (Audino) Simonetti, Frank Chiodo, Frank

Mancuso, and Frances (Guerrie) Mendicelli—all first-generation Americans—could recall as late as the 1970s, the names of their teachers, the grades they had received, and the names of their classmates. Frank Chiodo recalled "we hardly ever missed school." Collectively they recalled proudly how, as their English improved, they passed rapidly through successive grades, gaining recognition for their academic achievements. In school they also learned their rights and responsibilities as American citizens and became more assimilated into Anglo-American culture. Their ability to read, write, and speak English proved helpful to their immigrant parents.[119] Public education taught children the skills to navigate American society.

Those in Grand Junction's Italian community believed education had its place, but only as long as it helped the family. While school was important, boys at seven or eight years of age were expected to begin work after school and on weekends.[120] Amore Arcieri worked for his uncle Amore Raso at Raso Grocery and then went to work in his father's nursery business, but finished high school despite his father's protests. Frank Chiodo, Frank Mancuso, and Charlie Colosimo all left school in the eighth grade to work full time.[121] Those who quit school early believed that they had acquired the skills necessary to succeed in America. With some schooling, they could most likely pass tests for advanced positions on the railroad. Grand Junction offered many kinds of employment, so many boys learned young that working hard, earning money, and learning new skills to earn more money were essential aspects of becoming a successful father, husband, and member of the Italian community.

While girls and women usually did not work outside of the home for wages, they often helped other families. Susie Mendicelli recalled that "my father wouldn't let us [girls] work, but if somebody needed help, why, he would send us right over to help our neighbors." Helping families during canning season, after slaughtering a hog, or the arrival of a new baby was important, "because we all came from the same place, and because we were all poor.... We helped each other."[122] Such practices not only offered practical assistance to other families, but it also taught women early about the responsibilities of reciprocal behavior and their duties in maintaining social relationships. However, girls were supposed to stay close to home and their mothers, and projects outside of the home had to be done in the company of other women. Despite this desire to keep them home where they would learn the care and manage-

ment of the home, formal education was important because it helped them become the shrewd money managers expected by Italian culture. In addition, intelligent women made more attractive marriage partners.[123] This first generation of women raised in Grand Junction grew up expecting to use their educations, domestic training, and understanding of reciprocal obligations to build strong marriages, families, and maintain the viability of their ethnic community.

Parents also wanted to see their children successfully married into unions with fellow *paesani* that would form alliances and continue to strengthen the community and the family's connection with it. Marriage in America during this first generation reflected practices in Italy. Mothers often took the initiative in such matters by arranging marriages to mates who came from respected families. Despite the closeness within Italian communities, young men and women were allowed no private time together before marriage.[124] Because many young men came from Italy unmarried, when it was time to find a suitable wife, they contacted their mothers in Italy, who selected a suitable woman and sent her to live with a female relative in America until the ceremony could be performed. Mary Colosimo's mother was one such bride. After seeing a picture of a young woman on the wall of family friend's home, Mary's father, with the permission of a great aunt, had the woman brought from Italy to be his bride.[125] Angelina Simonetti explained her situation when she married in 1917: "I didn't know my husband from Adam."[126] While brides and grooms may have known their prospective spouses, by marrying within the community they ensured that their alliance would follow the patterns and expectations of their culture. Because family members designed or sanctioned their match, they could also expect the community support.[127] Marrying outside the Italian community was strongly discouraged because outsiders would have a hard time grasping the intricate social network and responsibilities of clientage within the community.

Marriage and family customs indicate how the Italian cultural practices kept this network strong and reveals how Italians could simultaneously work outside in the larger American community while maintaining those important aspects of their culture which provided a strong foundation for these new immigrants and protected them in times of crisis. Family was the most important of the three cultural anchors—land ownership, community, and family—which enabled Grand Junction's early Italian community to persevere and then prosper in Grand

The first generation of immigrants to Grand Junction and their children. (Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)
Back row left to right: Amore Raso (with gun), Joseph Cerra, Frances (Guerrie) Mendicelli, Lily Mendicino, Raffelina Raso (in back seat), unknown woman, Maria (Cerra) Marasco. Below Amore Raso: Dante Raso, Bernard Marasco (with moustache), Amos Raso (in V-neck sweater), Fred Marasco (bareheaded), unknown. Bottom row, left to right: Unknown, unknown, unknown, Paul Marasco (in overalls), Ann (Marasco) Cornelison with her hands on Roland Marasco's shoulders.

Junction. As the wealth and stability of the Italian community grew, so did its visibility and interaction with the rest of Grand Junction's residents.

The increasing wealth and community strength of "Little Italy" caused some in the Anglo-American community to view the Italians with trepidation. Alfrieda Elkins Stevens, an early non-Italian resident of Grand Junction, remembered the area south of downtown as a dangerous place: "we hated to go down by the railroad tracks." When asked about the location of a Greek Market on South Second Street, she recalled, "I knew where the Eliopulos market was, but we didn't go to THAT neighborhood."[128] When derogatory terms like "dago" and "wop" crept into conversations, fights often followed. Amore Arcieri, for example, said he "punched out" his boss on the railroad after he called him a "dago."[129] Shari Raso recalled family stories that the movie theaters often had signs reading, "no Negroes, no Greeks, and no Italians allowed."[130] So, while life within the neighborhood was safe and pleasant, the larger community often shunned Italians who ventured out of it.

In the early twentieth century, some outside events exacerbated antagonistic relations between the Italian immigrants and the larger Grand Junction community. Railroad strikes and labor agitation against the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad made many in Grand Junction angry with the Italian laborers who worked at the roundhouse, still dominated many work crews in Colorado and eastern Utah, and supported strikes against the railroad.[131] Prohibition reached Grand Junction early, and the town went "dry" in 1909, but some Italians continued to make and consume large quantities of wine.[132] Winepresses were a common feature in several Italian basements.[133] According to some sources, Amore Raso even brought train cars full of zinfandel grapes into Grand Junction from California during the prohibition decades.[134] Amore Arcieri and Angelina Simonetti indicated that some in the Italian community also knew about the movement of illegal liquor through Grand Junction, but remained silent about the activities they witnessed around the rail yard after dark.[135] What antagonized the Anglo-Americans about the Italian community was that in labor strikes and illegal liquor issues, the Italian community remained extremely loyal to one another and hid evidence of extra-legal activities. Their ability to persevere against the interference of the civil authority was a well-developed trait brought from southern Italy.[136]

Italians in Grand Junction faced perhaps the most blatant discrimination during the 1920s when the Ku Klux Klan organized in the

city on a strong anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant platform. While the Klan burned the Catholic church in Hotchkiss, Colorado and made several public displays of its strength, Italians remember the Klan's tactics as more intimidation than violence.[137] While Amore Raso had a cross burned across from his store, and burning matches were thrown at children leaving St. Joseph's Catholic Church school, the Klan's tactics seem to have focused primarily on boycotts of Italian businesses.[138] The Klan's tenure in Grand Junction threatened to ignite the anti-Italian attitudes already present in the community, but little happened, in part because the Italians refused to become confrontational. Amore Arcieri recalled that the Italians "left everyone alone."[139] Because they lived close together, shopped at stores owned by fellow Italians, and largely owned their own homes by the 1920s, the Italians could avoid areas of town where confrontations with Klan members might occur. The Catholic Church, north of downtown and outside of the Italian enclave, was an area where Italians were openly targeted. Italians did fight back, but Amore Arcieri and others indicated their behavior was defensive. Consequently, their lack of antagonistic behavior and the fact that many Grand Junction Italians had demonstrated their American patriotism fighting in World War I, made the Klan's attacks on the Italian community seem unreasonable.[140] The Italian immigrants did little to sustain or antagonize the Klan's ire.

As the Italian community matured, its wealth and general acceptance within Grand Junction increased. Consequently, Italians began to expand into the larger business and professional communities in Grand Junction during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these first-generation Italians eventually left the railroad to open successful businesses in downtown Grand Junction. Along with the grocers, such as Raso and Stranges, entrepreneurs like Gene Longo, Antonio Stranges, the Mendicino family, Joseph Cerra and others opened shoe and clothing businesses.[141] Amore Raso bankrolled many of these ventures.[142] Such financial risks were possible when they had strong community support, including a private banker, and a firm cultural enclave where they could retreat if their businesses failed.

Novelist Dalton Trumbo's paragraph in *Eclipse*, which opened this article, described the inhabitants of the Italian community as "easy-going" railroad employees, their gathering as "amorous and alcoholic," and depicted them as enthusiastic gamblers. Risking wealth in games of chance seems, at first glance, to be incongruent with the Southern Italians' preoccupation with trying to find economic stability. Joseph Peep's

Always in the center, Amore Raso poses. Left to right: Paul Marasco, Dante Raso, unidentified, unidentified, unidentified, Amore Raso (waving), Dee Fazio, Tony Fazio, and Joseph Cerra.

(Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)

father, after all, had lived frugally off of thirty-five cents a day. However, the ability to gamble was something of an economic barometer. By the 1920s, the Italian community had become affluent enough that people could take financial risks. A story told by Amore Arcieri reflects much about the acceptance of risk-taking in the 1920s. He recalled his job as a "runner," delivering bootleg whiskey in and around downtown Denver during Prohibition as an education in learning when to take risks to earn extra money. While he had enjoyed the security of working at his father's greenhouse in Grand Junction, his nights eluding Federal Agents on the streets of Denver garnered him extra cash for singing school and other luxuries.[143] Therefore, seen in the context of the art of risk taking, the gambling habits of Grand Junction's Italians in the 1920s indicates a community secure enough—financially and psychologically—to take chances.

The first generation of Italian immigrants in Grand Junction survived because of cultural anchors from Italy. The availability of land, the infancy of Grand Junction's social culture, and general similarities between their homeland and the Grand Valley all contributed to the success of these settlers. Historian Dino Cinel described the importance of landownership to southern Italians, but wrote that the general pattern of Italians throughout the United States was to make money in America, and to use it to acquire land in Italy.[144] However, the Italians who moved to Grand Junction acted differently. They successfully reestablished the most important aspects of their Italian culture in this first generation and counseled their children and grandchildren to be thankful for the opportunities that America offered. Several historians have approached the study of immigrant groups in American based on an analysis of their relationship with the dominant, and generally antagonistic Anglo-European culture they encountered upon their arrival.[145] What an analysis of the first-generation Grand Junction Italian community demonstrates, however, is that the immigrant experience is a not just a relationship between the immigrant and the social culture of their new environment. Instead, immigrants forge relationships in their new home with the natural landscape around them, the economic opportunities offered to them, and most importantly, they remain keenly aware of the reasons that prompted them to leave their homeland in the first place. On Colorado's Western Slope, Italian immigrants regained what they had lost in southern Italy, and this helped them negotiate life in their new home. The experience of first-generation Italian immigrants to Grand Junction was successful

because these families reclaimed the most intimate and precious aspects of the culture threatened in Calabria. Restoring their ability to own and cultivate land, reestablishing their community structure, and rebuilding healthy and complete families gave them the cultural anchors necessary to feel secure and successful in their new homes. These anchors helped them lay a strong foundation on which to build their American lives and insulated them from the sometimes-antagonistic Anglo-American culture outside their enclave in Grand Junction. Therefore, the Italians could become American citizens who understood and enjoyed their rights and obligations of citizenship while simultaneously upholding the most important parts of their native values.

Success wore well on the first generation of immigrants by the 1940s. Few of this group have been identified but bottom row left to right is Frank Mendicino, Amore Raso (kneeling with his hand raised), and Raso's son Dante. Elizabeth Jaccetta is behind Mendicino and Raffelina Raso is behind and between Raso and Dante. (Photo courtesy of Shari Raso.)

Notes

[1]Dalton Trumbo, *Eclipse* (London: Lovat, Dickson, and Thompson Limited, 1935), 164. This book is a fictionalized account of Grand Junction in the 1920s.
[2]Amore Arcieri, Interview with author, tape recording, 2 January 1999.
[3]Dominick Arcieri interview, D. Sundal, intvr, no date, Tape #101, Mesa County Library, Grand Junction, CO; Frank Mancuso, interview, A. M. Devine, intvr, 18 April 1980, Tape #353, Mesa County Library; Frank Sr., Frank Jr. and Angelina Simonetti, interview, A . Look, intvr, 20 September 1982, Tape #570, 2nd tape, Mesa County Library. These interviews consisted of long lists of family names, I chose the names listed most consistently.
[4]Mary Colosimo and Lorena Roice, interview, H. Hamlin, intvr, 3 February 1981,Tape #417, Mesa County Library.
[5]Frances Guerrie Mendicelli, interview, A. Devine, intvr, 13 December 1979, Tape #315, Mesa County Library; Susie Mendicelli, interview, J. Schwarz, intvr, 15 May 1980, Tape #350, 2nd tape, Mesa County Library; Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti Interview.
[6]Richard Gambino, *Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian Americans* (Garden City: New York Doubleday, 1947); Leonard Covello, *The Social Background of the Italio-Immigrant Child: A Study of the Southern Family Mores in Italy and America* (Leiden Netherlands: E.J.Brill, 1967); Oscar Handlin, "Immigration Portrayed As an Experience of Uprootedness," in Jon Gjerde, ed., *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History: Documents and Essays* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 5-8.
[7]Duane Vandenbusche, *A Land Alone, Colorado's Western Slope* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co, 1981), 45-49.
[8]Andrew J. Rolle, *The Immigrant Upraised: Italians Adventurers and Colonists in an Expanding America,* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), viii.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Mario Puzo, "Choosing a Dream: Italians in Hells Kitchen" in *Visions of America: Personal Narratives from the Promised Land,* Wesley Brown and Amy Ling, eds. (New York: Persea Books, 1993); and Robert Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem,1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[11]Frank Chiaro, interview, Harriet Hamlin, intvr, 15 February 1980, Tape #415, Mesa County Library; Rae and Roland Marasco. interview with author, tape recording, 12 January 1999.

[12]Patricia Lombardo, "The Ephemeral and the Eternal: Reflections on History," in *Rediscovering History: Culture Politics and the Psyche* , Michael S. Roth. ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 389.

[13]Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 6-7.

[14]J.K. Hyde, *The Social Foundations of Southern Italy: The Evolution of the Civil Life, 1000-1350* (New York: St. Martin's Press,1973),13.

[15]The medieval mind set was articulated by many medieval scholars. John of Salisbury, in the twelfth century, wrote, "A Commonwealth, according to Plutarch, is a certain body which is endowed with life by the benefit of divine favor...the head in the body is filled by the prince...the husbandmen correspond to the feet": John of Salisbury, "The Body Social" in *The Portable Medieval Reader*, James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin, eds. (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 47. Connecting the medieval mind set to the region of southern Italy is demonstrated in Hyde, *The Social Foundations of Southern Italy*,13 and Steven Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers: A History of The Mediterranean World In The Later Thirteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 9-10.Runciman discusses the invasion of Sicily and the institution of feudalism on the island and in southern Italy.

[16]Smith, *Modern Italy*, 10-11; Andrew J. Torelli, *Italian Opinion on America: As Revealed By Italian Travelers, 1850-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 3-4.

[17]Smith, *Modern Italy*, 14-15.

[18]Dino Cinel, "The Relationship Between American Money and Italian Land in Stimulating Return Migration," in Gjerde, ed., *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History*, 192.

[19]Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli: The Story of A Year,* trans. Frances Frebaye (New York: Time Incorporated, 1964), 234-235.

[20]Ibid., 3-38. One of the medical doctors in the village of Gagliano states that he has a girlfriend who is also sleeping with a fascist official who wants to help Carlo Levi get his conviction dismissed. This statement leads into a long discussion about the corruption of the government and how for 70 years the most corrupt officials end up in

southern Italy and how they all end up rich.

[21]Smith, *Modern Italy*, 214.

[22]Torelli, *Italian Opinion on America*, 32.

[23]Paul Reddin, *Wild West Shows* (Urbana, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 106.

[24]Torelli, *Italian Opinion on America*, 8-9. For Garibaldi in America, see page 13.

[25]Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 80. Levi discusses how Italians came back from America with more money, gold teeth, better skills, and were respected because of their newly acquired material possessions.

[26]Salvatore La Gumina, *The Immigrants Speak: Italian Americans Tell Their Story* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1979), xiii.

[27]Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Settling of North America: The Atlas of the Great Migrations into North America from the Ice Age to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 122.

[28]See Dominick Arcieri, interview, for migration of families like the Arcieri's, Raso's and Stranges; Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*, 171-173.

[29]Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies: A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 153. The faster railroads could connect important shipping cities, the sooner they could go from expending money on construction to making money shipping valuable commodities between destinations.

[30]Steven F. Mehls, *The Valley of Opportunity: A History of West Central Colorado* (Denver, CO: Bureau of Land Management Colorado State Office, 1982), 87-88.

[31]Dominick Arcieri, interview.

[32]*Official Freight Shippers Guide of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad* (Denver: Denver and Rio Grand Railroad, 1938), under the heading of "Construction," 31-32.

[33]Richard Tope, " Objective History of Grand Junction, part I," *Journal of the Western Slope* 10, 1 (Winter 1995), 8-9.

[34]Mary Rait, " Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade from 1881-1931, part 1," *Journal of the Western Slope*, 3, 3 (Summer 1988), 6-7.

[35]Leslie A. Young, "The Grand Junction News, 1882-1883." (masters thesis, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Department of Communications, 1987), 28-33.

[36]Ibid., 34.

[37]Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*, 99.
[38]Dominick Arcieri, interview.
[39]Cinel, "The Relationship Between American Money and Italian Land in Stimulating Return Migration,"189. This contrasts with Dino Cinel's assessment that Italians continued to want to return to Italy and simply "endured" America to make enough money to return.
[40]Joe Peep, interview, E. Kyle & E. Faussone, intvrs, 20 April 1977, Tape #74, Mesa County Library.
[41]Frank Mancuso, interview.
[42]Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*, 20.
[43]Dominick Arcieri, interview.
[44]Shari Raso, interview with author, tape recording, 12 January 1999.
[45]Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promise Land of Error* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 24,352.
[46]Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations of Everyday Life, 1875-1915* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991),133-139.
[47]Susie Mendicelli, interview.
[48]Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti interview.
[49]Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 130.
[50]Ibid., 129.
[51]Ladurie, *Montaillou*, 355. Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 130. Gambino deals competently with the importance of the garden and flowers as symbolism of prosperity, but I am struck by Ladurie's description of the lack of accumulation of material surplus by peasants in comparison to the importance of making the land productive.
[52]Angelina and Frank Sr. Simonetti, Simonetti interview ; Dominick Arcieri, Amore Arcieri, and Mancuso, interviews; Stephen Stranges interview with author, tape recording, 12 January 1999. Rose gardens were important to Grand Junction immigrants and mentioned in the Stranges, Mancuso, Simonetti interviews; and in obituaries: "Joseph Scalzo," obituary, *Daily Sentinel*, (Grand Junction, CO) 10 May 1984, 32. *Daily Sentinel*, 13 March 1999, 9B, contains this quote: "Frank Mancuso," obituary,, contains this quote: "Frank loved flowers and gardening and was so proud of his roses and vegetables." The symbolism of flowers in a productive garden comes from Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 130, and Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*, 80.
[53]Micaela Di Leonardi, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience: Kinship, Class, and Gender Among California's Italian Americans* (Ithaca, NY:

Cornell University Press, 1984), 38; Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 20; Jo Pagano, *The Paesanos* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1940),13.
[54]Smith, *Modern Italy*, 206-208.
[55]Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 20.
[56]Ibid., 47.
[57]Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*,114.
[58]Mancuso, interview.
[59]Di Leonardi, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience*, 223-224; Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*, 307; Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, 77-79.
[60]Raso, interview.
[61]Amore Arcieri, interview.
[62]Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 47.
[63]Susie Mendicelli, interview.
[64]Mancuso, interview.
[65]Mary Colosimo, Colosimo and Roice interview.
[66]Frances Mendicelli, interview.
[67]Susie Mendicelli, interview.
[68]Mary Colosimo, Colosimo and Roice interview.
[69]Rae Marasco, Marasco interview.
[70]Frank Sr. and Angelina Simonetti, interview; Marasco interview, Amore Arcieri interview, Stranges Interview; Conflenti is given as the hometown for Dominick Arcieri in his obituary *Daily Sentinel*, 16 October 1991, 2B; "Amore Raso," *Daily Sentinel*, 14 November 1948, 5 and other obituaries only mention Italy in general.
[71]Dominick Arcieri, interview explains Petrofesso phone; reciprocity was also discussed in Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, 91; and Di Leonardi, *Varieties of Ethnic Experience*, 131-150.
[72]Pagano, *The Paesanos*, 3.
[73]Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*,102-104.
[74]Dominick Arcieri interview; Stranges interview; Pagano, *The Paesanos*, 48.
[75]*Paesani* is the plural of *paesano*.
[76]Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti interview.
[77]Trumbo, *Eclipse*, 69; Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti interview.
[78]Frank Simonetti Sr., Simonetti interview.
[79]Raso, interview. Italian on calendar translated by Shari Raso.
[80]Frank Simonetti Sr., interview.
[81]Marasco, Amore Arcieri, Raso, Simonetti, Simonetti interview.
[82]Amore Arcieri, interview.

[83]Ibid.
[84]Raso, interview ; Marasco, interview.
[85]Frank Chiaro, interview, H. Hamlin, intvr, 3 February 1981, Tape #415, Mesa County Public Library.
[86]Injury Journal, Denver and Rio Grande Railroad papers, Box 33, item #1406 , Colorado Historical Society, Denver, CO; Frank Chiodo, interview, H. Hamlin, intvr, 18 March 1980, Tape # 219, Mesa County Public Library.
[87]Roice and Colosimo, interview.
[88]*Employer's Relief Association Constitution, By-Laws and Rules and Regulations* (Denver: Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company, 1888), Denver and Rio Grande Railroad papers, Box 32, item #1399, Colorado Historical Society.
[89]Marasco, interview.
[90]Michael P. Caroll, *Madonnas that Maim: Popular Catholicism in Italy since the Fifteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xx.
[91]Rev. Thomas J. Hickey, *Catholics of the Western Slope* (Fresno, CA: Mid-Cal publishers, 1978), 63-64. Quote: "While the priest, Father McGuire was Irish, he spoke fluent Italian and served the chapel until his death." Significantly, the early immigrants to Grand Junction even started their own chapel in a home near the train station as Annie Petrofesso remembered. While it did not last long, its existence indicates that Italians did not immediately integrate into St. Joseph's, the Catholic church which served Grand Junction.
[92]John O'Brien, *Happy Marriage: A Guide for Catholics* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1956), 285, provides a technical and modern definition of godparents' duties. However, Ladurie, in *Montaillou*, 126-127, provides an interesting definition of *compère and commére* as terms that refer to "fellow sponsers," but are tied to baptisms and a reciprocal relationship of obligations and rights.
[93]Pagano, *The Paesanos*, 13-14.
[94]Amore Arcieri, interview; Marasco, interview; Frank Simonetti, Simonetti interview.
[95]"Amore Raso" obituary, *Daily Sentinel*, 14 November 1948, 5. Obituaries of these early Italians included listings of pallbearers and honorary pall bearers.
[96]Susie Mendicelli, interview.
[97]"May (Stranges) Paonessa," obituary, *Daily Sentinel*, 30 November 1967, 3; "Maria Guesepa (Cerra) Marasco,"obituary, *Daily Sentinel*,

29 January 1969, 3; "Frances (Guerrie) Mendicelli," obituary, *Daily Sentinel*, 9 May 1984, 32. Most of the first generation Italian women were members of St. Joseph's Catholic Church Rosary and Altar Society according to these obituaries.

[98]Susie Mendicelli, interview.

[99]Ibid.

[100]Raso, interview.

[101]Jo Pagano, *Golden Wedding* (New York: Random House, 1943), 177; Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, 32.

[102]Pagano, *Golden Wedding*, 67.

[103]Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*,113; young men's competition with fathers, 117.

[104]Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, 122; Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 258-259.

[105]Chiaro, interview.

[106]Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 102.

[107]Pagano, *Golden Wedding*,193.

[108]Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 46.

[109]Ibid., 47.

[110]Roland Marasco, Marasco interview.

[111]Stranges, interview.

[112]Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 154-155.

[113]Rolle, *Immigrant Upraised*, 140.

[114]Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 148.

[115]Mary Colosimo, Colosimo and Roice interview.

[116]Roland Marasco, Marasco interview.

[117]Mary Colosimo, Colosimo and Roice interview.

[118]Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, 109; Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 160.

[119]Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti interview; Marasco, interview.

[120]Frances Mendicelli, interview. She suggested that the Catholic faith taught that children begin to reason at age seven and could be accountable for their actions from that time forward.

[121]Mancuso, Chiodo, Colosimo, interviews.

[122]Mendicelli, interview.

[123]Marasco, interview; Raso, interview. Education was encouraged for Ann Marasco, Roland Marasco's older sister, and Amore Raso's granddaughter Shari along with the message that successful marriage partners were very important; Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 160.

[124]Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 172-173;Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street,*136; Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli,* ordering a bride from Italy, 250.
[125]Mary Colosimo, Colosimo and Roice interview.
[126]Frank Simonetti Sr., Simonetti interview.
[127]Gambino, *Blood of My Blood,* 172-173; Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street,*136.
[128]Emphasis added by author. Alfrieda Elkins Stevens, interview, E. Kyle, intvr, 5 July 1978,Tape #177, Mesa County Library.
[129]Amore Arcieri, interview.
[130]Raso, interview.
[131]The *Daily Sentinel's* coverage of strikes: 9 July 1894, 1; 16 September 1922, 1.
[132]Tope, *Objective History of Grand Junction,* 51.
[133]Marasco interview; Amore Arcieri, interviews.
[134]Marasco interview; Amore Arcieri, and Frank Sr., Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti interview.
[135]Frank Sr., Angelina Simonetti, Simonetti interview; Amore Arcieri, interview; Dominick Arcieri, interview.
[136]Gambino, *Blood of My Blood*, 53. The text sites the *Unfortunate Pilgrim* scene where the Irish policeman will not apprehend the Italian immigrant caught stealing ice for fear of the vengeance of the larger Italian community.
[137]Kenneth Baird, "The Ku Klux Klan in Grand Junction, 1924-1927," *Journal of the Western Slope* 4,1 (Winter 1989), 26-27.
[138]Ibid., 26-27; Trumbo, *Eclipse*, 96.
[139]Amore Arcieri interview; Raso Interview; Frank Simonetti Sr., Simonetti Interview.
[140]Frank Simonetti Sr., Simonetti interview; Amore Arcieri, interview; Hickey, *Catholics of the Western Slope*, 38.
[141]Dominick Arcieri, interview.
[142]Dominick Arcieri, interview; Raso, interview; Stranges interview.
[143]Amore Arcieri, interview.
[144]Cinel, "The Relationship Between American Money and Italian Land in Stimulating Return Migration,"189.
[145] Handlin, "Immigration Portrayed As an Experience of Uprootedness," 2-8.

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