

Our Italian Heritage

Italian-American identity found in history

by John Peter Curielli

Vice President for Cultural Affairs

I hope everyone enjoyed my last article about Christopher Columbus. As an attorney in the Midwest, I am a member of the Justinian Society of Italian-American Lawyers. In a recent newsletter, I came across a poetic piece written by Angelo Bianchi. I would like to present it to you now and hope that it instills in you the same pride that it did in me when I first read it:

"I am an Italian-American.

My roots are deep in an ancient soil, drenched by the Mediterranean sun, and watered by pure streams from snow-capped mountains.

I am enriched by thousands of years of culture.

My hands are those of a mason, the artist, the man of the soil.

My thoughts have been recorded in the annals of Rome, the poetry of Virgil, the creations of Dante, and the philosophy of Benedetto Croce.

I am an Italian-American, and from my ancient world I first spanned the seas to the New World. I am Cristoforo Colombo.

I am Giovanni Caboto, known in American history as John Cabot, discoverer of the mainland of North America.

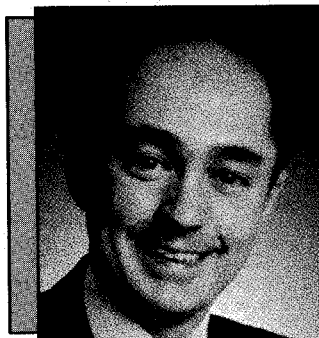
I am Amerigo Vespucci, who gave my name to the New World - America.

First to sail on the Great Lakes in 1676, founder of the territory that became the state of Illinois, colonizer of Louisiana and Arkansas, I am Enrico Tonti.

I am Filippo Mazzei, friend of Thomas Jefferson, and my thesis on the equality of man was written into the Bill of Rights.

I am William Paca, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

I am an Italian-American, I financed the Northwest Expedition of George Rogers Clark and accompanied him through the lands that would become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and



"I will not be told that my contribution is any less nor my role not as worthy as that of any other American."

Angelo Bianchi, quoted by John Peter Curielli, V.P.-Cultural Affairs

Michigan. I am Colonel Francesco Vigo.

I mapped the Pacific from Mexico, to Alaska and to the Philippines. I am Alessandro Malaspina.

I am Giacomo Beltrami, discoverer of the source of the Mississippi River in 1823.

I created the Dome of the United States Capitol. They called me the Michelangelo of America. I am Constantino Brumidi.

In 1904 I founded in San Francisco the Bank of Italy now known as the Bank of America - the

largest financial institution in the world. I am A.P. Giannini.

I am Enrico Fermi, father of nuclear science in America.

First enlisted man to win the Medal of Honor in World War II, I am John Basilone of New

Jersey.

I am an Italian-American. I am the million strong who served in America's armies and the tens of thousands whose names are enshrined in military cemeteries from Guadalcanal to the Rhine.

I am the steel maker in Pittsburgh, the grower in Imperial Valley of California, the textile designer in Manhattan, the movie maker in Hollywood, the homemaker and the breadwinner in 10,000 communities.

I am an American without stint or reservation, loving this land as only one who understands history, its agonies and its triumphs and can love it and serve it.

I will not be told that my contribution is any less nor my role not as worthy as that of any other American.

I will stand in support of this nation's freedom and promise against all foes. My heritage has dedicated me to this nation. I am proud of my full heritage, and I shall remain worthy of it.

I am an Italian-American." ■