

Recognizing Your Italian Citizenship

Achieving recognition of your Italian citizenship by blood (*jure sanguinis*) is a huge step, not to be taken lightly. Once having decided to do this, we can quickly recognize the many benefits: the right to travel to and from Italy (maybe with two passports) without restrictions, the right to work in Italy without special permits, excellent and virtually free (State financed) health care, access for ourselves and our children to some of the world's best universities and conservatories, and the right to be a European, which is in fact an extension of all of those rights mentioned above! Along with these benefits come certain responsibilities, most notably fiscal.

I took this momentous step when I moved to Lucca 25 years ago. The procedures were not easy, at first they seemed mysterious to me, and my language skills were rather rudimentary. But I was persistent. It took months to acquire the birth, death, and marriage certificates of my children, myself, my mother Pierina, and my grandmother Celestina. Some aspects of the procedure were downright quirky. I qualified through the maternal line, which is permissible to those born after 1 January 1948 (so my sister who was born 18 months earlier than me didn't qualify). Living in France at the time, I tried to order documents from a distance, with sporadic good and bad fortune. Frustrated in trying to obtain my grandfather's birth certificate, I finally visited the town of his birth, Bologna, where a computer connected to the municipal administration in the main piazza gave me an official printout for free, instantly! To prove that the documents in the name of Pierina were the same as Peggy (my mother's American name), after seeking legal proof of name change I finally explained that Peggy is simply the American version of the name Pierina. Well, that's how my mother saw it. She told me she was never "Margaret" (the full name for which "Peggy" is strangely enough considered a nickname).

My mother was born in New Jersey and had married an American military man in 1945. She was very proud of being American and didn't want to recover her Italian citizenship. Still, I asked her to please sign the documents so that her grandchildren could have the rights I mentioned above. I promised that I had no intention of giving up my American citizenship, and would do my best to have her and my dad (veteran of two wars) buried at Arlington Cemetery, as she so

strongly desired. (This wish was fulfilled twelve years ago, after they had both passed away.)

I have no regrets about my choices. In fact this year during the lockdown I managed to help two other Americans going down the same road. Since travel has been severely restricted by the lockdown, and the bureaucracy requires a certain degree of skill to navigate it successfully, these individuals turned to *Grapevine* for help in obtaining the birth certificates of their grandparents, who were born in the 1800s. In each case I began by re-constructing the family genealogy as much as was known, then did more research online.

The first case was relatively straightforward. Phoning several small towns in Sicily, where the grandparents were born, I was soon directed to the State Archives in Trapani. Following online guidelines, but more importantly thanks to the kindly follow-through of the clerk who phoned me regularly to help guide me through the process, I was soon pleasantly surprised to receive the official documents through the mail. Domestic mail in Italy takes only a few days to arrive. Since international mail is not so reliable, I relied on FedEx and the Lucca office of Explus, to be sure that these official documents would arrive post-haste in the U.S.A.

The second case was a bit more complicated. Nonno Luigi was born in a small town in central Italy in 1891. Luigi's American granddaughter was informed by the municipal authorities that his birth certificate could not be found (or didn't exist). Family connections were of little help, and anecdotal information about the family history was approximative. After all, people often changed their names, or had them changed in the process of Americanization. Luigi and his father emigrated to the U.S.A. 14 years later, so there were records beginning at that time (1905). With this information, I began phoning Italian offices and was directed to the Church Archives. Once again, thanks to the helpful guidance of a professional Archivist, and despite delays due to August shut-downs, I was able to receive a baptismal certificate that proved Luigi's birth and will hopefully satisfy the Italian Consulate.

If you have Italian blood and want to explore your heritage, maybe just out of curiosity or to make that big life-changing decision of having your citizenship recognized, contact me through *Grapevine*!

– by Norma Jean Bishop

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Markets

General markets	Books and prints	Arts and crafts
Lucca, S. Francesco. fruits/vegetables Wed 4-7pm	Lucca, Corte del Biancone Daily	Lucca, Piazza San Giusto last Sat/Sunday
Lucca, near the fairground Wed & Sat a.m.		Lucca, Portone dei Borghi Wednesdays 10am to 7pm
B. Giannotti, Foro Boario Sat a.m.	Antiques	Lucca, Corso Garibaldi 2nd weekend of the month
S. Maria a Colle Thurs a.m.	Lucca 3rd Sat/Sunday	Marina di Pietrasanta Wednesday afternoons
Ponte a Moriano Tues a.m.	Altopascio 2nd Sunday	Castelnuovo Garfagnana 1st weekend of the month
S. Maria del Giudice Mon a.m.	Forte dei Marmi 1st Sat/Sunday	Pieve Fosciana last Sunday
Pietrasanta Thurs a.m.	Pietrasanta 1st Sunday	Plants and flowers
Marina di Pietrasanta Sat a.m.	Barga 2nd Sunday	Lucca, Corso Garibaldi Friday mornings
Tonfano Sat a.m.	Viareggio 4th Sat/Sunday	Pietrasanta 3rd Sunday
Castelnuovo Garfagnana Thurs a.m.	Bientina 4th Sat/Sunday	Markets in Florence (the biggest)
Pescia Sat a.m.	Pescia 4th Sunday	Piazza San Lorenzo 7-2 daily, 7-5 Sat, closed Sundays
	Querceta Saturday mornings	Parco delle Cascine Tuesdays 7am to 2pm
		Piazza dei Ciompi Flea Market 9am to 7.30pm daily