



AMHS

NOTIZIARIO

CELEBRATING ITALIAN CULTURE & COMMUNITY SINCE 2000

A Publication of the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of the Washington DC Area

July/August 2020



AMHS MARKS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

*Postponed Celebration Does Not Dampen Community Spirit;
Special Messages from Society Presidents*

June 14, 2020 was supposed to be a special day – the celebration of 20 years of existence for the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of the Washington D.C. Area and all of the spirit of community, family and love of all things Italian which have defined the Society's character. Just as the coronavirus outbreak affected our ancestral homeland, so too we in the United States had to bow to the reality of life during a pandemic and postpone our 20th anniversary event scheduled for that date. We will hold it at a time when it is safe to come together in the kind of warm, open celebration that such a landmark occasion deserves.

In the meantime, please enjoy these special messages from all of the Society's presidents, past and present. Stay safe and *andra' tutto bene*. — Carmine James Spellane, Secretary

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear members and friends:

I hope that everyone is healthy and that you have made the best of a spring that was marred by the loss of so many lives and by the imposition of difficult limitations on those of us lucky enough not to be struck by the coronavirus. By the time that you read this, summer will have arrived. Unfortunately, we'll all still be dealing with the dramatic fallout from the virus, which will crimp our summertime activities in much the same way that it did our enjoyment of the spring. Like you, I very much long for a return to the pre-pandemic days of what now seems like a long time ago.

As you know, we had to cancel our March general meeting as well as our June celebration of the Society's 20th anniversary. Given the continuing guidance on social distancing, it is unlikely that we will be able to celebrate Ferragosto in the same way as in the past. Although we have not yet made a final decision, the uncertainty surrounding the state of things in mid-August, combined with the need to make reservations and preparations now, makes it unlikely that we'll be able to hold our usual picnic. We will inform you once the decision is final. In the likely event that we cannot get together physically, we will try to set up a virtual get-together instead.

Despite these cancellations and postponements, our organization is not exactly in sleep mode. We put together two enjoyable online sessions in which participants came together to discuss a film with an Italian American theme. In each case, an Italian American film producer, Jim Toscano, led the discussion and provided insights that only someone on his side of the camera could offer. Plans will soon be underway for a third such session. In addition, by the time you read this, a number of us will have taken part in a special online event to reunite the Italian American communities — from New York to Rome. On June 21, Father's Day, participants will have had the pleasure of chatting with the cast and crew of "Road to the Lemon Grove", a film shot on location in Sicily which deals with the topics of immigration, the importance of family, and love.

So our organization is as active as it can be in these unsettling times. Virtual encounters cannot really replace actual, physical ones, but they are the best substitute we have in the present circumstances. I know that we are all looking forward to the development of a safe and effective vaccine and the resumption of life as we once knew it. In the meantime, stay safe and enjoy the summer.

*Best regards,
Ray LaVerghetta*



SPECIAL MESSAGES *from Society Presidents*



LUCIO D'ANDREA
Founder and President Emeritus
2000 - 2003

It is appropriate and desirable to pause and recognize the accomplishments of the Society since its founding 20 years ago. Its purpose and objectives have been preserved and have manifested themselves in various programs and activities.

Regrettably because COVID-19, we were prevented from holding a scheduled anniversary celebration in June. We hope this postponement is temporary and that we will celebrate the Society's anniversary in due course. I invite all members to continue their support of the Society and serve as ambassadors to expand its membership. *Un affettuoso augurio a tutti!*

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ENNIO DI TULLIO
Second AMHS President
2004-2007

It is with great pride that I congratulate the leaders and members of the Abruzzo and Molise Society on the occasion of its 20th anniversary! This is an incredible milestone that I, as a founding member and second president of the Society, receive tremendous satisfaction in witnessing. While adapting to changing times, AMHS continues to flourish in its mission of service to the Italian American community of Washington, D.C., most specifically those of Abruzzese and Molisano origin. The bimonthly meetings present topics of interest and provide the opportunity for *cameratismo*; the Notiziario offers well-written articles and lovely photographs emphasizing our heritage and the preservation of our traditions; and the awarding of the annual scholarships to worthy students encourages connections to Italian language and culture.

A special thanks goes to all the officers who served the Society in the past and present. Without their commitment to the preservation of our roots in Abruzzo and Molise, we could not have achieved this past twenty years of success. **Tantissimi auguri for an even brighter future!**



OMERO SABATINI
Third AMHS President
2008 - 2009

Well, folks, here I go. One score years ago Lucio D’Andrea brought forth on the Washington Metropolitan Area a Society conceived in camaraderie and dedicated to the proposition that all Abruzzesi and Molisani should get together to keep their heritage and traditions alive. These words may seem a bit wild but are basically accurate to describe what Lucio and a handful of his friends were able to accomplish. Besides, why not paraphrase the words of one of the world’s greatest statesmen when speaking of Lucio’s success story?

Some skeptics said that the Society would not “long endure,” but they were wrong, and membership grew from approximately 150 at the inception of the Society to 239 as of June 1 of this year. A few of them come from regions other than Abruzzo and Molise and all members are creative and productive people well respected in the communities in which they live. A few (not I, alas) are even listed in the *Who’s Who*.

Of course, not all the well-known people with roots in Abruzzo and Molise are (yet) members. Perhaps it is up to Lynn Sorbara to recruit them! *Abruzzesi* famous all over the world include (but are not limited to) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, singer/actress Madonna, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Ancestors of Pompeo and Madonna, like those of Edvige D’Andrea, Mario and Vince Ciccone, and Anna Maria DiPilla, came from Pacentro and part of those of Pelosi from Villa Sant’Angelo. Pacentro is a small town in the Provincia of L’Aquila and Villa Sant’Angelo is a village, also in the Provincia of L’Aquila, about ten miles from where I grew up.

And so, my fellow members, let us be proud of belonging to AMHS and let us continue to strive to make it an even more important element in the conduct of American-Italian relations. **Bless you all.**



RICHARD (DICK) DIBUONO
Fourth AMHS President
2010 - 2012

Hearty congratulations to the members of the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society on this special occasion — the 20th anniversary of our Society’s founding. To my congratulations, I add my appreciation and thanks to all those members who have served the Society in some way during the past two decades. Without those volunteers and their efforts, it is certain that the Society would not be where it is today ... one of the most vibrant and active organizations of Americans of Italian heritage in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. I know that you want the Society to continue to provide the activities you enjoy attending or participating in, so, carry on the great tradition and step up to the plate when asked to serve on a committee, help at some activity, or stand for election as a director or officer of the Society. With your involvement the Society will continue to thrive and provide benefits to its members.

When I lived in Virginia (I now reside in Massachusetts), the Society was the focus of my attention and my efforts for many years. I had the pleasure of serving it in many capacities and always with enjoyment. Like most of you, I found it to be a group of wonderful folks who, like I am, are proud of

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20TH ANNIVERSARY: *Special Messages from Society Presidents*

▼ *Continued from page 3*

their Italian heritage and of the contributions made to American society by our ancestors and ourselves. I am a third generation Italian American and was the first president of the Society not born in Italy. My parents were born here but their parents, my grandparents, all immigrated to America from Italy in the very early 1900s — the paternal side from the lovely town of Ielsi in the region of Molise, and the maternal side from the beautiful seacoast city of Fano in the region of Le Marche. Listening to the stories told by and about my grandparents' young lives in Italy and the values and customs they brought with them and carried on here, sparked the interest I have for Italian history and culture, for my Italian genealogy and for Italy itself. I am a proud American, a proud Italian American and, still, a proud member of the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society. ***Auguri AMHS!***



MARIA D'ANDREA-YOTHERS

Fifth AMHS President

2013 - 2018

Since its founding in June 2000, the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society has survived and thrived, one of the most vibrant Italian American organizations in the Washington, D.C. area. Throughout the years, the Society has stayed true to its core mission, the development and promotion of the cultural, social and educational heritage of the Abruzzo and Molise regions of Italy, and that of Italy in general. Through the tireless dedication of the Executive Committees past and present, as well as the many member volunteers, we have provided our members and friends with informative and entertaining programs, special events, galas, the Ferragosto picnic, the annual winetasting event, and travel — just too many activities to list! Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of our members.

As the Society has grown and matured over the years, we have worked hard to make ourselves a more dynamic organization that reaches across the ages and the country. We have embraced social media in order to appeal to a wider audience, through a Facebook page and through the creation of a revamped website. We have done all of this while staying true to the vision of the Society's founders and to the mission. Through our collective efforts, I know that our Society will continue to grow, survive and thrive for many years to come. It is unfortunate that we could not come together on June 14 to celebrate the Society's 20th anniversary — but we will be together in spirit — our AMHS family — and look forward to celebrating together next year. ***Buona fortuna e tanti auguri AMHS!***



RAY LAVERGHETTA

Sixth AMHS President

2018 - Present

I happily take this opportunity to congratulate the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of Washington, D.C. on the 20th anniversary of its founding. In doing so, I am recognizing the dedication, enthusiasm and skills of all of our members past and present, and in particular of all of the current and past members of our Board of Directors, and of all of the current and past officers of our Society. It is these individuals who collectively are the AMHS and who therefore have earned kudos and congratulations for the organization's continuing operation, viability and success.

To what end over the years have our officers, Board members, and members given up their time, channeled their energies, and lent their talents? The answer is that their goals have been exactly those set out by the organization's founders: to preserve the cultural and linguistic heritage of the regions of Abruzzo and Molise and, indeed, of Italy in general, as a way of honoring those who came before us and of inculcating pride and respect in those who will come after us.

Our members, Board members and officers have accomplished these goals by celebrating Italian culture together at our general meetings, by collaborating with other local Italian-American organizations whose goals coincide with ours, and by awarding scholarships each academic year to two deserving students who have shown an interest in Italian culture and language. The scholarships in particular are an effective force multiplier in the AMHS mission to preserve and pass on an appreciation for Italian culture and language to future generations. Our Scholarship Committee members, past and present, and all of our AMHS members and supporters who have contributed to our annual Scholarship Fundraising Campaign, have played a key role in helping outstanding young students carry the banner of Italian culture and language into the future.

Sustaining our organization will be a challenge. As in the past, it will take the hands, heart and ideas of a more than a few likeminded individuals, particularly of the younger generation. This challenge, however, is a story for another day. ***Today is about congratulating the AMHS on everything that it has accomplished over the last twenty years and wishing it similar success in the future. ■***



SIAMO UNA FAMIGLIA

AMHS Membership

By Lynn Sorbara, 2nd Vice President, Membership

Greetings! We hope that our members and their loved ones are safe and healthy during this global crisis. As of June 3, 2020, the Society has 239 members. We would like to remind you that the option to renew your membership online has been simplified. We now have a new drop-down box under Membership, on the AMHS website "Renew Your Membership", at www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org/renew-your-membership/#myaccount. Enter your email address and password. (If you've forgotten your password, you can request that it be emailed to you). Your membership profile will populate, and you are given the option to renew, upgrade, or update your billing. Membership renewals are automatically sent via email. We appreciate your continued support of AMHS events and activities. Should you have any questions regarding membership, please email me directly at: drlynnrose@yahoo.com. ■

BIRTHDAYS

Compleanni a Luglio

Vincenzo Marinucci, July 3; **Dianne Francesconi Lyon**, July 6; **John Verna** and **Susan Baldassari**, July 7; **Raymond Bernero**, July 12; **David Ciummo** and **Gianpiero Forcina**, July 13; **Anthony D'Onofrio**, July 15; **Julia Boivin**, July 16; **Ilaria Pirocchi**, July 17; **Crystal Hovermale**, **Matthew DiFiore**, and **Roberto Severino**, July 19; **Mario Ciccone**, July 21; **Mary Smargiassi Muth**, July 22; **Lina Pronio**, July 26; and **Lynn Sorbara**, July 27.

Compleanni a Agosto

Mario Marinucci, August 2; **Ray LaVerghetta**, August 5; **Pietro Masci**, August 8; **Nancy DeSanti**, August 15; **Joseph Ruzzi, Sr.** and **Karen Grasso**, August 16; **Rose Ruzzi**, August 18; **Angela Campanella**, August 21; **Robert Lucian** and **Joseph Novello**, August 23; and **Donna Caruso**, August 30.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to: **Margaret Fortier** and **Kristine Massari**.

ANNIVERSARIES

Anniversari a Luglio

Joseph & Joann Novello, July 4; **Berardino Palazzo & Ilaria Pirocchi**, July 10; **Peter & Charlie Iovino**, July 14; **Robert & Barbara Verdile** July 17; **Renato & Rita Orcino**, July 19; **Greg & Diane Bernabei**, July 21; **Stephen diGirolamo & Christine Smith**, July 25; **Stephan & Rita Carrier**, July 30; and **David Ciummo & Sabrina De Sousa**, July 31.

Anniversari a Agosto

Palmer & Emilia DeMeo, August 1; **Joseph & Pam Lupo**, August 5; **Corrado Dal Forno & Julie Finigan-Dal Forno**, August 7; **Domenico & Julia Conti**, August 19; and **Guy & Donna Caruso**, August 26.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Category	# of Persons
Associate (Couple)	2 x 2 = 4
Associate (Individual)	31
General (Couple)	55 x 2 = 110
General (Individual)	82
Honorary	5
Scholarship	4
Student	3
Total Membership:	239



GENEALOGY RESEARCH WEBSITE

By Nancy DeSanti

Father Ezio Marchetto of Holy Rosary Church has found a helpful website for those who are interested in doing genealogical research. The website is www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it/?lang=en and it enables researchers to access civil records from many provinces of Italy. For example, the information from the Isernia State Archives was published May 12, 2020.

The website is called "Antenati, Gli Archivi per la Ricerca Anagrafica." It has a searchable list of all Archives in Italy and the available sources.

These main sources are listed as:

- The Civil Registry, together with the attached 1-year and 10-year origin indexes
- Military service and army archives.
- Notary public archives.
- Family and personal archives.
- Nominal sources and sources for emigration. ■

Give the Gift of **MEMBERSHIP!**

For details visit **Become a Member** on www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org.

Third Golden Age Transformed Post-War Italy

By Nancy DeSanti, 1st Vice President-Programs

AMHS members may recall that, due to the pandemic, we had to cancel our luncheon meeting planned for March 22, 2020, with author and Italian culture expert Carla Gambescia. Carla recently gave a virtual talk from her home in Chappaqua, N.Y., about Italy's "Third Golden Age" during which she covered some of the topics she would have addressed at our meeting.

The First Golden Age was the Roman Empire. The Second Golden Age was the Renaissance, a 250-year period of artistic creativity beginning in 15th century Florence.

Carla explained that what can be called the Third Golden Age occurred when Italy "rose like a phoenix" from the ashes of World War II. In less than 15 years, Italy experienced an almost unimaginable transformation — largely due, in a nutshell, to "celluloid alchemy."

Carla cited a recent worldwide survey of 20,000 people that rated Italy as #1 in influential culture, #1 in fashion, #1 in great food and #2 in most sexy (Brazil was #1). Carla's book, "La Dolce Vita University: An Unconventional Guide to Italian Culture from A to Z," is a series of brief essays about all things Italian.



Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg in the iconic Trevi Fountain scene from *La Dolce Vita*.

She noted that, after World War II, one movie director, Federico Fellini, stood out for his classic films such as *La Dolce Vita*, *8½* and *La Strada*. His distinctive, surrealist style blended fantasy and baroque images with earthiness. Perhaps his most iconic scene was in *La Dolce Vita* with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg in the Trevi Fountain. The film made the Trevi Fountain a must-see destination for visitors to Rome from all over the world. Now, on the 100th anniversary of his birth, Rome is naming part of



Pitti Palaca's Sala Bianca in Florence became an important setting for international fashion shows.

the Lungotevere Tiber roadside after Fellini.

In fashion, Carla said that back in Renaissance times, Isabella d'Este was considered the Jacqueline Onassis of her era, but that Italians were generally viewed as makers of the fabrics, but the French were considered to be the designers. Italy held its own with accessories, handbags and shoes. But this began to change in the 1950s, as American actresses began to favor Italy.

Around that time, Giovanni Giorgini saw an opportunity, and in 1951, he realized the potential for making the stunning ballroom (Sala Bianca) of Florence's famous Pitti Palace into an important setting for international fashion. In the years since, fashion shows in the White Room have played an important role in promoting an international quality of fashion, making the Pitti name world renowned.

Very unique was Emilio Pucci, a member of one of Florence's oldest noble families. He designed ski wear in the U.S. and swimwear too. His colorful creations were "eye candy" exuding youthful energy. And he was the first to sign his garments on the outside.

Meanwhile, Brioni was making exquisitely tailored men's suits, worn by Marcello Mastroianni. And even this year, Brad Pitt wore a bespoke

Brioni velvet tux on the red carpet.

Another luminary was designer Giorgio Armani, who went to medical school to study anatomy. Since 1974, he has designed for men and women with style, elegance and practicality in mind. Then there was Gianni Versace, who Carla said was seen as "Pucci's heir." She noted that there's a saying, "Armani dresses the wife, Versace dresses the mistress."

For home furnishings and furniture, "aesthetic pragmatism" described the elegant, functional objects for home and office.

All this goes to the idea of "*spezzatura*," which she defined as "effortless mastery." And just what you would expect from the land of "*la bella figura*."

And of course, the Vespa, Carla explained, embodied the freedom and spirit of *la dolce vita*. It provided beautifully styled yet affordable transportation, but it also became a cultural icon, epitomized by Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn in the movie "*Roman Holiday*."

As to food and wine, Carla said this took longer to catch on than did fashion, but Italy toppled France in the realm of food too. High-end restaurants in the U.S., began to feature Northern Italian cuisine. The growing interest in eating healthier food, fresher ingredients and the Mediterranean diet, all helped popularize Italian cuisine. Olive oil replaced artery-clogging French butter, and Lidia Bastianich replaced

Julia Childs. The farm-to-table movement favors authentic Italian cooking. And now “cucina povera” — the Southern Italian cooking of pasta, bruschetta, polenta — is having a moment.

Winemaking in Italy goes back thousands of years, but since 1963, a wine classification system began with a set of quality standards (DOC and DOCG). And while French wines for many years were the most popular, now Carla said it’s a “coin toss” between French and Italian wines.

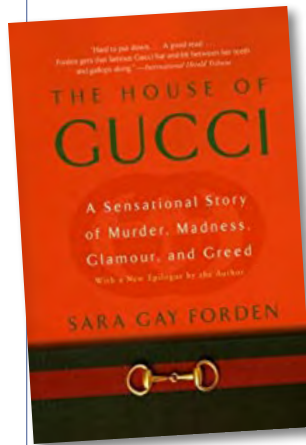
Italy experienced an almost unimaginable transformation — largely due, in a nutshell, to “celluloid alchemy.”

— **Carla Gambescia**, author and Italian culture expert

So while the First Golden Age of the Roman Empire showed engineering and organizational genius, and the Second Golden Age of the Renaissance showcased artistic and cultural genius, the Third Golden Age of post-war Italy is a triumph of marketing genius and lifestyle. Instead of conquering territory, Italy captured the hearts and minds of the world. Through attraction and persuasion, Italy presented an alluring new vision of how to eat, how to dress and how to get around.

And despite the ongoing pandemic, Carla said in conclusion, the spirit of “Andra’ tutto bene” is strong, and when the crisis is over, she believes Italy will be as it was or even better. ■

Sara Forden’s Gucci Book Will Star Lady Gaga in the Movie



AMHS members may recall a talk by author and reporter Sara Forden in January 2018 on her book “The House of Gucci: A Sensational Story of Murder, Madness, Glamour and Greed.” Now she has given a virtual talk under the auspices of the Italian Cultural Society.

During her virtual talk on June 7, 2020, she was joined by Robin Givhan, the Washington Post fashion critic, so there was an interesting back-and-forth between them on the state of Italian fashion. As Sara explained in her book, the Gucci family was quick to see an opportunity after the war to sell to the Americans, and by the time they opened their store in New York, to most Americans, Italian fashion meant “Gucci and Pucci.” The Gucci brand also led the way in being the first big luxury brand to go public.

But as she explained during her AMHS talk, there was also a lot of controversy and strife among the generations of Guccis. Eventually, one of the family members, Maurizio Gucci, was murdered and his ex-wife Patrizia was convicted of arranging the killing.

The book seemed perfect for a movie, and now production is ready to move forward as soon as the pandemic situation changes for the better. Hollywood of course has basically shut down movie production, but Sara says the movie has financing, a screenplay is being written, and Ridley Scott will be the director. Lady Gaga (Stephanie Germanotta) will play the title role of Patrizia, “the black widow” social climber ex-wife who wore a fur coat and gold jewelry as she was taken into custody. Sara said Lady Gaga has already hired an acting coach to help her prepare for the role of Patrizia.

Sara said she has already been conferring with the Italian screenwriter who plans to make Patrizia the narrator. Sara recalled that she once interviewed Patrizia in her living room at home after her divorce and kept up a jailhouse correspondence. Sara said Patrizia was released after 18 years, and she now lives in Milan very close to the tribunal where she was convicted. She can sometimes be seen walking down the street with a parrot on her shoulder. How could this NOT be a movie, right? — Nancy DeSanti ■

Professor Vittoria’s Book Now Available in Italian

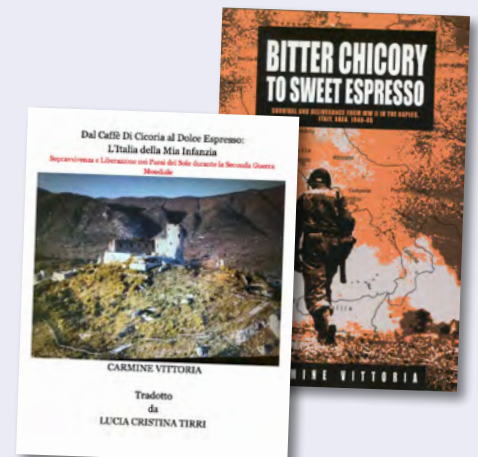
By **Nancy DeSanti**

AMHS members may recall that Professor Carmine Vittoria gave a talk at Casa Italiana on June 9, 2019 (it seems like such a long time ago). He told the compelling story of family, a story of hardship and survival, through the eyes of a boy growing up in the small town of Avela before, during and shortly after World War II.

After his talk, Maria Fusco, the Education Counselor at the Embassy of Italy, suggested to him to translate his book into Italian. Professor Vittoria is happy to announce that his book, “Bitter

Chicory to Sweet Espresso” (Survival and Deliverance from WW II in the Naples Area 1940-49), has been translated into Italian by Lucia Cristina Tirri. The title of the book is “Dal Caffè di Cicoria al Caffè Espresso: L’Italia della mia Infanzia”, Sopravvivenza e Liberazione Nei Paesi del Sole Durante La Seconda Guerra Mondiale.”

He notes: “Words can easily be translated, but, most importantly, Dr. Tirri has been able to capture the spirit and intent of the book as well. Those events are described from the perspective of a child, who experienced those events first-hand.” ■



The paperback and e-book in Italian and English are available in [Amazon.it](https://www.amazon.it) or [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Canadian-American Special Force in Italy Remembered for Key Victory in World War II

By Nancy DeSanti

Memorial Day seemed like an appropriate time to learn about the exploits of the First Special Service Force in Italy during World War II. I took advantage of the opportunity to watch a lecture livestreamed from Italy about one of the key battles fought by these elite Canadian and American soldiers. The modern American and Canadian special operations forces trace their heritage to this unit.

Their exploits are commemorated at the Museo del Secondo Risorgimento, a World War II history museum and near the site of one of the greatest Allied victories during the Italian campaign, at Monte la Difensa. The museum is in the town of Mignano Monte Lungo in Campania.

The lecturer, Gianni Biasi, has a deep connection to the area, having been born there and now returned after years in Canada. He was livestreaming near the base of Monte la Difensa as he explained how, in 1943-44, a well-constructed and fortified system of Axis defensive lines stretched across central Italy, from sea to sea, to stop the Allied advance.

The First Special Service Force (1st SSF), also known as the Devil's Brigade, fought in battles along the Winter Line, and the bravery and sacrifices of this elite American-Canadian commando unit ultimately led to the Allied liberation of Rome on June 4, 1944. Gianni explained that even their name was carefully chosen, so that the Germans would not be able to figure out if there was a Sec-



Gen. Robert T. Frederick, leader of the First Special Service Force.



This plaque commemorates the heroics of the First Special Service Force on Mt. La Difensa.

ond (or Third) Special Service Force.

This Canadian/American force trained in Helena, Montana, for 10 months, working extensively on winter and mountain warfare techniques. They had to be in peak physical condition, and proficient in hand-to-hand combat, mountain climbing, the proper use of maps and parachuting. The force members had to be ready for a possible assault on skis (since their destination was originally supposed to be Norway).

Gianni told us the amazing story of the group's leader, American Robert Tryon Frederick, who in three years' time rose to be a brigadier general at the age of 37. He was stationed at Santa Maria Capua Vetere in the province of Caserta in Campania. He became known as an officer who led from the front — trudging through the mud with his men and helping carry stretchers for his wounded men. Frederick went on to have an extraordinary career, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly called him “the greatest fighting general of all time,” adding that “if we had a dozen more like him, we would have smashed Hitler in 1942.”

The force was tasked with taking two heavily fortified German positions on the Winter Line in the Italian mountains — one at Monte La Difensa and the other at Monte La Remetanea. The importance of these mountains lay in their posi-

“It looked as if we were marching into Hell.”

tion relative to Hitler's Gustav Line. La Difensa and Remetanea were the last entrenched positions before the Gustav Line, and an Allied push through the mountains would enable them to advance closer to Rome. Strategically, the mountains provided a commanding view of the countryside and highway, giving German artillery on the mountain control of the surrounding area.

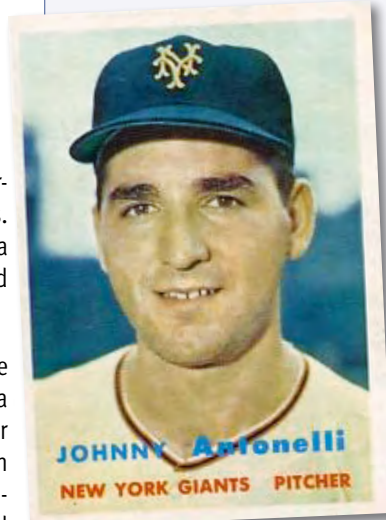
The paths leading up La Difensa were heavily scouted by the force prior to their attack, and it was determined that the best way to approach the entrenched enemy was up an almost vertical steep slope in hope of catching the Germans off guard.

After reaching the base of the mountain at dusk, the force began their ascent of La Difensa on December 2, 1943, under cover of a heavy artillery barrage. Unfortunately, the Germans were made aware of the Allied positions after members of the force tripped over loose gravel while moving along the mountain. The Germans shot flares into the air and the battle was on. One soldier said later, “It looked as if we were marching into Hell. The whole mountain was being shelled and seemed to be on fire.”

They fought an incredible battle with some men going up the mountain towards the German encampment at the top, while others went around the side of the mountain and went up the sheer cliffs tied to each other with ropes, in the

The Impressive Career of JOHNNY ANTONELLI

(Editor's Note: Many lifelong baseball fans miss the rhythm of the baseball season due to the pandemic and must be content with exploring the history of the national pastime. AMHS Board member Joseph "Sonny" Scafetta, Jr. has provided us with this look at the career of an accomplished pitcher with Abruzzo roots.)



freezing rain at night time with the men each carrying 70 pounds of equipment on their backs. They managed to go up in only 4 hours (while a normal, fit person would take 6½ hours), and they drove the Germans from the mountain.

Photographs of the battle can be seen in the museum. They were taken by Robert Capa, a Hungarian-American photographer who later went to Normandy and was the only civilian photographer during the landing. Capa is considered by some to be the greatest combat and adventure photographer in history. His famous photos of that Normandy landing are contained in a book, "Slightly Out of Focus" and 11 of them were published in Life Magazine.

This battle was the first time during the war that the Italians fought alongside the Allies, and the museum lists all the many Italians who were killed in the fighting.

Gianni said there is convincing evidence showing that the First Special Service Force was the first to enter Rome. Frederick himself was wounded by the Germans on the Margherita Bridge, but, along with his driver, he jumped out of his vehicle and began firing at the Germans. Gianni noted that there is a plaque in Rome honoring Frederick on the corner of Via Veneto near the American Embassy.

The fighting is described in the book "Brave Men," by Ernie Pyle, a Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist and war correspondent.

The Canadian/American force became such a cohesive unit that they became like brothers and it was difficult for them to break up two years later. After fighting in Italy, the force served in southern France before being disbanded in December 1944.

The successful assault on La Difensa was the basis for the 1968 movie "The Devil's Brigade," starring William Holden, Cliff Robertson, and Vince Edwards. Quentin Tarantino's 2009 film, "Inglourious Basterds" features a character named Lt. Aldo Raine played by Brad Pitt who wears the unit's crossed arrows collar insignia and red arrowhead shoulder patch, and Tarantino cited the 1st SSF as an influence. In 2013, the United States Congress passed a bill to award the 1st Special Service Force the Congressional Gold Medal. ■

John August Antonelli was born in Rochester, New York, on April 12, 1930. His father August was born in the municipality of Casalbordino, a coastal town on the Adriatic Sea, just north of the city of Vasto, in the province of Chieti, in the region of Abruzzo. (In the 2007 census, Casalbordino had a population of 6,410.) Johnny's father immigrated to New York in 1913. Johnny's mother, Josephine Messoro, was born in Buffalo. Both of his mother's parents were born in Italy.

The Bonus Rule went into effect in 1947 to prevent rich teams from signing all the top prospects. Johnny was a left-handed pitcher at Jefferson High School from which he graduated in June 1948. Nine of the 16 major league teams in existence at that time bid for his services. On June 29, 1948, he signed with the Boston Braves for a bonus of \$52,000. He went straight to the majors, so he never pitched in the minor leagues. On July 4, 1948, five days after signing, he pitched his first game for the Braves. Boston went on to win the 1948 National League pennant.

In early 1951, Johnny was drafted into the U.S. Army and was stationed at Fort Myer in Arlington, Virginia. At the end of his two years of service, he rejoined the Braves for the start of the 1953 season at their new home in Milwaukee. As a regular member of the starting rotation, he finished fifth in the National League with an earned run average of 3.18.

In February 1954, he was traded to the New York Giants in a six-player deal for veteran outfielder Bobby Thomson who had hit the pennant-winning home run in 1951. In the middle of the 1954 season, Johnny was selected for the National League All-Star Team. During the entire season, he won 21 games and lost only seven. He led the National League with the most shutouts (six) and with the lowest earned run average of 2.30. In the World Series against the Cleveland Indians, he won Game 2 and earned a save in Game 4, as the Giants won in a four-game sweep. As a result, he was given The Sporting News Pitcher of the Year Award. He then made the National League All-Star Team each year from 1956 through 1958.

In 1959 the Giants moved to San Francisco where he again made the All-Star Team and won the first game against the American League on July 7. By the end of the season, he was tied for the lead in the National League for shutouts with four. In early 1961 he was traded to the Cleveland Indians. On July 4, 1961, his contract was sold to the Milwaukee Braves. At the end of the season, his contract was sold again, this time to the expansion team New York Mets. Instead of reporting to the Mets for Spring training in 1962, he decided to retire at the age of 32.

In 14 major league seasons, he appeared in 377 regular-season games, winning 126 of them against 110 losses. He pitched 102 complete nine-inning games, had 25 shutouts with the opposing team not scoring a single run, and also had 21 saves as a relief pitcher. He struck out 1,162 batters and walked only 687. His career earned run average was 3.34.

After his baseball career, he returned to his home town of Rochester where for many years he ran a chain of 28 Firestone Tire stores. He died in Rochester on February 28, 2020, about six weeks short of his 90th birthday. He is survived by his second wife, Gail Harms, four children, Lisa, Donna, Regina, John Jr., and ten grandchildren. His first wife, Rosemarie, died in 2002. ■



CARAMANICO TERME

PROVINCE OF PESCARA, REGION OF ABRUZZO

By Nancy DeSanti

The picturesque small town of Caramanico Terme is situated near the confluence of the Orfento and Orta rivers, on a hilltop between the Monte Morrone and the Majella mountains. The town has approximately 2,080 inhabitants, known as Caramanichesi. It is a popular destination for nature and art lovers, being located in the heart of the Maiella park, which has been called one of the wildest and most spectacular corners of the Apennines

According to legend, the town's name derives from a French monk named Caro who lived around the 10th century. Or, it may take its name from "cara," meaning rock." But more likely its origin comes from the Lombard settlement of Arimannia in the Middle Ages. It was only in 1960 that Terme was added to Caramanico in honor of Abruzzo's only thermal baths.

The record of the town dates back to Lombard times. Then it underwent a remarkable development in the 14th-15th centuries under the D'Aquino family when many important monuments were built. Thanks to the feudal lords of the D'Aquino family, the churches contain priceless works of art such as 16th century wooden sculptures and 13th century frescoes — an amazing patrimony for such a rather small place.

In 1706 a terrible earthquake nearby almost destroyed the town.



Panoramic view of Caramanico Terme.

The spa activity is the main attraction of the town, enriched by a program of plentiful exhibitions and events.



The thermal baths occupy much of the town.

The thermal baths occupy the rest of the inhabitable area and the whole town slopes down from the "centro storico."

Since 1960 when the town took the name of Caramanico Terme, it saw a quick rise in tourism, linked to the thermal source. The sulfurous sources were used already in 1576, but the thermal structure was only built in 1836 — a rudimentary shed along the river. In 1901, the real spa and medical complex was inaugurated.

The spa activity is the main attraction of the town, enriched by a program of plentiful exhibitions and events.

The town does have some beautiful churches, such as the Church of S. Maria Maggiore from the 15th century, with its Gothic exterior and a portal with a depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin from 1476. The exterior depicts apostles, pilgrims and singers with 15th century musical instruments. The 17th century Assumption Chapel has a beautiful Baroque interior.

CARAMANICO TERME

PROVINCIA DI PESCARA, REGIONE ABRUZZO

Another church worth visiting is the Romanesque church of St. Tommaso, founded in the 13th century in honor of Thomas of Canterbury. The side portals have floral decorations, while the central one has a high-relief of the Twelve Apostles and Christ Enthroned dating from 1118. The interior houses a Corinthian column (known as Colonna santa) which is said to have miraculous properties.

Visitors have noted that the nearby ski slopes at Lanciano are one of the few places in the world where it is possible to have a “white week” in full view of the sea. With the right timing, one could combine an early beach holiday with the final ski runs of the season. ■

What to See

- Church of S. Maria Maggiore
- Church of S. Tommaso
- Naturalistic and Archaeological Museum dedicated to well-known biologist Paolo Barrasso who studied the different environments of the Parco Nazionale della Maiella
- Hermitage of San Giovanni all’Orfento from the 13th century

Important Dates

- **January 17** — Feast of St. Anthony
- **August 15** — Feast of the Assumption

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Translated by Ennio DiTullio

La pittoresca cittadina di Caramanico Terme si trova vicino alla confluenza dei fiumi Orfento e Orta, su una collina tra il Monte Morrone e i monti Majella. La città ha circa 2.080 abitanti, conosciuti come Caramanichesi. È una destinazione popolare per gli amanti della natura e dell’arte, essendo situato nel cuore del parco Maiella, che è stato chiamato uno degli angoli più selvaggi e spettacolari del Appennino

Secondo la leggenda, il nome della città deriva da un monaco francese di nome Caro che visse intorno al X secolo. Oppure, può prendere il nome da “cara”, che significa roccia.” Ma più probabilmente la sua origine deriva dall’insediamento lombardo di Arimannia nel Medioevo. Fu solo nel 1960 che Terme fu aggiunta a Caramanico in onore degli unici bagni termali abruzzesi.

I registri della cittadina risalgono ai tempi lombardi. Poi la cittadina subì un notevole sviluppo nel XIV-XV secolo, sotto la famiglia D’Aquino, e in quel periodo furono costruiti molti monumenti importanti.

Grazie ai signori feudali della famiglia D’Aquino, le chiese contengono inestimabili opere d’arte come sculture di legno del XVI secolo e affreschi del XIII secolo, un patrimonio incredibile per un luogo così piccolo.

Nel 1706 un terribile terremoto nelle vicinanze distrusse quasi la città.

I bagni termali occupano il resto della zona abitabile e l’intera città scende dal “centro storico”.

Dal quando nel 1960 prese il nome di Caramanico Terme, la cittadina ha visto una rapida ascesa del turismo, legata alla fonte termica. Le sorgenti solforose sono state utilizzate già nel 1576, ma la struttura termica è stata costruita solo nel 1836 - un rudimentale capannone lungo il fiume. Nel 1901 fu inaugurato il vero centro benessere e complesso medico.

L’attività termale è l’attrazione principale della cittadina, arricchita da un programma di

numerose mostre ed eventi.

La cittadina ha alcune belle chiese, come la Chiesa di S. Maria Maggiore del XV secolo, con il suo esterno gotico e un portale con una rappresentazione dell’incoronazione della Vergine risalente al 1476. L’esterno raffigura apostoli, pellegrini e cantanti con strumenti musicali del XV secolo. La Cappella dell’Assunzione del XVII secolo ha un bellissimo interno barocco.

Un’altra chiesa che vale la pena visitare è la chiesa romanica di San Tommaso, fondata nel XIII secolo in onore di Tommaso di Canterbury. I portali laterali hanno decorazioni floreali, mentre quello centrale ha un altorilievo dei Dodici Apostoli e Cristo intronizzato risalente al 1118. L’interno ospita una colonna corinzia (conosciuta come Colonna santa) che si dice abbia proprietà miracolose.

I visitatori hanno notato che le vicine piste da sci a Lanciano sono uno dei pochi luoghi al mondo dove è possibile avere una “settimana bianca” in piena vista del mare. Con il giusto tempismo, si potrebbe combinare una prima vacanza al mare con il termine della stagione sciistica. ■

Attrazioni del luogo:

- Chiesa di S. Maria Maggiore
- Chiesa di S. Tommaso
- Museo Naturalistico e Archeologico dedicato al noto biologo Paolo Barrasso che ha studiato i diversi ambienti del Parco Nazionale della Maiella
- Eremo di San Giovanni all’Orfento del XIII secolo

Date da ricordare:

- **17 gennaio** — Festa di San Antonio
- **15 agosto** — Festa dell’Assunzione



VENAFRO

PROVINCE OF ISERNIA, REGION OF MOLISE

By Nancy DeSanti

The beautiful town of Venafro is situated at the foot of Mount Santa Croce in the province of Isernia. It has approximately 11,240 inhabitants known as *Venafрани*.

Thanks to its key position on the border with Campania, Abruzzo and Lazio, Venafro was always a center where trade, culture and the arts intersected.

Venafro has very ancient origins, dating back to the Italic people known as the Samnites. It was a well-known Samnite town and then a Roman town. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it became part of the Lombard dukedom of Benevento, passing later to the rule of the Count of Molise. Under the Pandone family, Venafro grew in importance.

The historic center looks like a fortified village along the steep slope of the mountain, quite far from the ancient Roman center which was identified as the area of the Roman elliptical amphitheater. In the center of modern Venafro, visitors can still see the remains of the amphitheater, which was believed to be able to hold up to 15,000 spectators. This structure was later used as stables and to store agricultural tools.

The large number of churches in the area gives Venafro the nickname of 'City of 33 Churches.'

The large number of churches in the area has given Venafro the nickname "City of 33 Churches." There are many churches of various sizes and ages in the historic center and in the foothills area. Unfortunately, many of these places of worship are now closed and abandoned.

One of the most notable is the Church of the Annunciation. It is an example of Baroque architecture. It was built with material from a nearby



Panoramic view of Venafro.

Roman theater and had a gabled façade. Over the centuries it underwent a major restoration and eventually the church assumed its present Baroque appearance. The single nave interior preserves a crucifix from the 14th century. In a lateral niche is the silver bust of St. Nicandro with relics of martyrs. The church also has a large frescoed dome, visible from every point of the town.

According to legend, it was founded by the superhero of Greek mythology, Diomedes, seeking redemption for his role in the Trojan War. Legend has it that Diomedes fought alongside Achilles and went on covert military operations with Odysseus, receiving help through divine interventions. With the superpowers of strength, wisdom, cunning, and courage, Diomedes was considered the perfect embodiment of heroic values.

In Greek mythology, Diomedes, although one of the fighters to return safely from the Trojan War, was locked out of his kingdom and he retired to a place near Lucera in Puglia, where he spread peace and civilization by building new cities. About 10 Italian cities are said to have been founded by this Greek superhero of mythology, and although most of them are concentrated around northern Puglia, he was also said to have established settlements in Vasto in Abruzzo, Benevento in Campania and Venafro in Molise.

Venafro can be divided into two distinct areas: the old town, of Roman origin, enclosed by walls and dominated by Castle Pandone, and the new town that has several newly developed neighborhoods.

The highest point of the town is the Pandone Castle. The castle is well worth seeing — built in the 10th century A.D. in the form of an enclosure, with a tower at the top and an entrance on the eastern side. The castle was meant to offer shelter to the population in case of invasions. Destroyed by an earthquake in 1349, it was rebuilt with 3 more round towers. Then in the 16th century, the Pandone family purchased Venafro and transformed the castle into a Renaissance palace, with huge dancing salons and fine gardens.

On October 24-25, 1860, Venafro hosted King Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoia during his travels to meet Giuseppe Garibaldi.

Almost a century later, between the autumn of 1943 and spring of 1944, there was fierce fighting with the Germans. Venafro was hit hard by Allied bombing raids on March 15, 1944 that resulted in about 400 victims among the civilian and military.

Also worth visiting is the Parco Oraziano behind the city's cathedral, which became the Regional

Agricultural Historical Olive Park of Venafro, thanks to a local law aimed at establishing a protected area to preserve the heritage of Venafro's olives and olive trees. It is the first park in the Mediterranean area with an olive theme.

The patron saints of the city are martyrs Nicandro, Marciano, and Daria whose feast occurs on June 17. The festival to honor the saints originated when an earthquake struck in 1688, but the town escaped serious damage or casualties. The people began an annual festival of thanksgiving on the first Sunday of June, to honor of their saints in gratitude for having escaped harm.

The festival, one of the biggest attractions of the region, is celebrated June 16-18 with performances and processions, and it attracts thousands of faithful and tourists even outside the region. On June 16, there is a procession in the evening with a bust of St. Nicandro and relics from the church of the saint. In the evening, there is a band concert in the market square. On June 17, there is a pontifical mass, involving the bishop and civil and religious leaders. During this ceremony, the mayor delivers keys of the city, symbolizing the protection of the people to patron saints. In the evening, there is a concert in the square generally with a nationally known singer. The festival culminates with an impressive procession on June 18, with thousands of people, in which the statues of three saints are carried from the church of St. Nicandro to the Church of the Annunciation. ■

What to See

- Pandone Castle
- Museo archeologico and the Museo Nazionale del Molise.
- Monastery of San Nicandro, where San Pio da Pietrelcina stayed during a period of his life.

Important Dates

- **Christmas** — Living crib
- **June** — Donkey race
- **June 17** — Feast of San Nicandro, the patron saint



Castello Pandone

VENAFRO

PROVINCIA DI ISERNIA, REGIONE MOLISE

Translated by Ennio DiTullio

La bellissima città di Venafro si trova ai piedi del Monte Santa Croce, in provincia di Isernia. Ha circa 11.240 abitanti conosciuti come Venafeani.

Grazie alla sua posizione chiave al confine con Campania, Abruzzo e Lazio, Venafro è sempre stato un centro dove si intersecavano commercio, cultura e arte.

Venafro ha origini molto antiche, risalenti al popolo italico dei sanniti. Una ben nota città sannita e poi una città romana, dopo la caduta dell'Impero Romano, divenne parte del ducato lombardo di Benevento, passando poi al conte del Molise. Sotto la famiglia Pandone, Venafro crebbe di importanza.

Il centro storico si presenta come un villaggio fortificato lungo il ripido pendio della montagna, ben lontano dall'antico centro romano, identificato come l'area dell'anfiteatro. Nel centro della moderna Venafro, i visitatori possono ancora vedere i resti dell'anfiteatro ellittico romano. Si ritiene che le tribune potessero contenere fino a 15.000 spettatori. Questa struttura è stata successivamente utilizzata per ospitare stalle e conservare gli strumenti agricoli.

Il gran numero di chiese della zona ha dato a Venafro il soprannome di "Città di 33 Chiese". Ci sono molte chiese di varie dimensioni ed età nel centro storico e nella zona pedemontana. Purtroppo, molti di questi luoghi di culto sono ora chiusi e abbandonati.

Uno dei più notevoli è la Chiesa dell'Annunciazione. È un esempio di architettura barocca. È stato costruito con materiale da un vicino teatro romano e aveva una facciata triangolare. Nel corso dei secoli ha subito un importante restauro e alla fine la chiesa ha assunto il suo attuale aspetto barocco. L'interno della navata singola conserva un crocifisso del XIV secolo. In una nicchia laterale è il busto d'argento di San Nicandro con reliquie di martiri. La chiesa ha anche una grande cupola affrescata, visibile da ogni punto della città.

Secondo la leggenda, fu fondata dal supereroe della mitologia greca, Diomede, alla ricerca della redenzione per il suo ruolo nella guerra di Troia. Diomede combatté nella guerra di Troia al fianco di Achille, dice la leggenda, e andò anche in operazioni militari segrete con Ulisse e ricevette aiuto attraverso interventi divini. Con i superpoteri della forza, della saggezza,

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continued on 14



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dell'astuzia e del coraggio, Diomede era considerata l'incarnazione perfetta dei valori eroici.

Nella mitologia greca, Diomede, fu uno dei combattenti che tornò salvo dalla guerra di Troia, ma fu bloccato fuori dal suo regno e si ritirò in un luogo vicino a Lucera in Puglia, dove diffondò la pace e la civiltà costruendo nuove città. Si dice che circa 10 città italiane siano state fondate da questo supereroe greco della mitologia, e anche se la maggior parte di esse sono concentrate nel nord della Puglia, si dice che abbia stabilito insediamenti come Vasto in Abruzzo, Benevento in Campania e Venafro in Molise.

Venafro può essere diviso in due aree distinte: il centro storico, di origine romana, racchiuso da mura e dominato dal Castello Pandone, e la nuova città che ha diversi quartieri di nuova sviluppo.

Il punto più alto della città è il Castello Pandone. Il castello merita di essere visto - costruito nel X secolo d.C. sotto forma di un recinto, con una torre in cima e un ingresso sul lato orientale. Il castello doveva offrire rifugio alla popolazione in caso di invasioni. Distrutto da un terremoto nel 1349, fu ricostruito con altre 3 torri rotonde. Poi, nel XVI secolo, la famiglia Pandone acquistò Venafro e trasformò il castello in un palazzo rinascimentale, con enormi saloni di danza e bei giardini.

Il 24 e 25 ottobre 1860 Venafro ospitò il re Vittorio Emanuele II di Savoia durante i suoi viaggi per incontrare Giuseppe Garibaldi.

Quasi un secolo dopo, tra l'autunno del 1943 e la primavera del 1944, ci furono feroci combattimenti con i tedeschi. Venafro fu duramente colpita dai bombardamenti alleati il 15 marzo 1944 che causarono circa 400 vittime tra i civili e militari.

Da visitare anche il Parco Oraziano dietro la cattedrale della città, che è diventato il Parco Storico Agricolo Regionale di Venafro, grazie ad una legge regionale volta a istituire un'area protetta per preservare il patrimonio delle olive e degli oliveti di Venafro. Il Parco Storico Agricolo Regionale di Venafro è il primo parco nell'area mediterranea sul tema dell'oliva e dell'oliveto.

I santi patroni della città sono i martiri Nicandro, Marciano e Daria la cui festa si svolge il 17 giugno. La festa per onorare i santi ha avuto origine quando un terremoto colpì nel 1688,

ma la città non subì gravi danni o vittime. Il popolo iniziò una festa annuale di ringraziamento la prima domenica di giugno, per onorare i loro santi in segno di gratitudine per essere sfuggiti al danno.

Il festival, una delle più grandi attrazioni della regione, si celebra dal 16 al 18 giugno con spettacoli e processioni, e attira migliaia di fedeli e turisti anche al di fuori della regione. Il 16 giugno, c'è una processione la sera con un busto di San Nicandro e reliquie dalla chiesa del santo. La sera, c'è un concerto con banda nella piazza del mercato. Il 17 giugno c'è una messa pontificale, che coinvolge il vescovo e i capi civili e religiosi. Durante questa cerimonia, il sindaco consegna le chiavi della città, simboleggiando la protezione del popolo ai santi patroni. La sera, c'è un concerto in piazza, di solito con un cantante noto a livello nazionale. La festa culmina con un'impressionante processione il 18 giugno, con migliaia di persone, quando le statue dei tre santi vengono portate dalla chiesa di San Nicandro alla Chiesa dell'Annunciazione. ■

Le attrazioni del luogo:

- Castello di Pandone
- Museo archeologico e il Museo Nazionale del Molise.
- Monastero di San Nicandro, dove San Pio da Pietrelcina rimase durante un periodo della sua vita

Date da ricordare:

- **Natale** — Presepe vivente
- **Giugno** — Corsa degli asini
- **17 giugno** — Festa di San Nicandro, il santo patrono

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