



## **Conference of Writers on Chicago Italians at Casa Italia May 8-10**

Dominic Candeloro (March 27, 2008)



Conference of Writers on Chicago Italians at Casa Italia May 8-10 features over 20 scholars and writers led by Fred Gardaphè, Distinguished Professor of Italian American Studies Queens College/ Calandra Italian American Institute

In an effort to make the Chicago Italian American community the best documented in the nation, the conference will bring together all of the scholars and writers who have focused their work on Chicago Italians. Ultimately, the conferees hope to publish an anthology of excerpts from the writings of the 25 presenters that will be the essential first reference for anyone interested in the



Chicago Italians. Using the "Reconstructing Italians in Chicago" title, the anthology will also include excerpts of works from scholars unable to attend the event personally.

Conferees will review and assess the works of previous scholars like Giovanni Schiavo, Rudolph Vecoli, Humbert Nelli and the late Tina DeRosa. In another phase of the conference scholars like Fred Gardaphe', newly appointed Distinguished Professor of Italian American Studies at Queens College CUNY and Tony Ardizzone award-winning novelist from Indiana University will share their ideas with the other presenters and the public. Tony Ardizzone is a Chicago native and the author of six books of fiction.

He is a winner of the prestigious Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction and the Chicago Foundation for Literature Award for Fiction. Michael Antonucci, Assistant Professor of English at Keene State College in New Hampshire will present analysis of the concept of Italian American masculinity in Ardizzone's work.

"This conference is long overdue!" remarked Gardaphe', "though they work on similar topics, these thinkers have never before been brought together in one place. We can learn so much from each other."

The organizers have crafted a single-session event so that all the presenters will get to hear and comment on the work of all of the other presenters. It is an interdisciplinary event as well. Some like Candeloro and Ernesto Milani of Cuggiono (Italy) will focus on the history of Chicago's Italians. Professor Giuseppe DeBartolo, Professor of Demography and Chair of the University of Calabria's Department of Economics and Statistics, will share his research on the migration of Calabresi to Chicago. Gary Mormino, Professor of History at the University of Florida at St. Petersburg, will address the impact of World War II on Chicago Italians and Peter L. Belmonte, a retired Air Force Officer from O'Fallon, IL, will share findings from his book on the general topic of Italian Americans and the War. Carlo "Calogero" Lombardo, a native of Altavilla Milicia will share material from his autobiographical novels about the post World War II migration of his Sicilian family.

Gloria Nardini, an Ethnographer from UIC, will present research that she has done on Italian/American values and behavior. Annette Dixon will review the material in "Italian-American Women of Chicagoland," a book that she compiled for Arcadia Publishing. Judy Santacaterina of the Communications Department at NIU will relate the story of her grandmother Amabile and Italian language broadcasters 1930-1960. Performance artist Chickie Farella, a native of Melrose Park, is slated to make an appearance that will focus on Italian American female spirituality.

Various neighborhoods will be profiled using diverse techniques. Author Kathy Catrambone and Vince Romano of the Taylor Street Archives will cover that neighborhood. Tony Romano is a high school teacher whose acclaimed novel, "When the World Was Young" is set in the Grand and Western neighborhood in the 1950s. Rose Ann Rabiola, Associate Director of the old Italians in Chicago Project and now the PR director for the City of Boulder, NV, will compare notes on Bridgeport Italians with novelist Billy Lombardo, whose "Logic of the Rose" is set in that neighborhood. Peter Venturelli, Chair of the Sociology Department at Valparaiso University, will revisit and update perspectives on his research on his Tuscan neighborhood at 24th and Oakley. Candeloro also intends to inject his observations on Italian American history and culture in his hometown, Chicago Heights.



The point man at this conference on the criminal image of Chicago Italians and the "White Hand Society" is policeman-turned-professor, Robert "Mickey" Lombardo, Professor of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago. Bill Dal Cerro, Vice President of the Italics Institute and former Fra Noi reporter, is also slated to weigh in on this topic.

To cover family history and genealogy, the organizers have engaged Fra Noi's own Dan Nimiec who is also president of PIP-POINTERS 27 (People in Person-Pursuing Our Italian Names Together). Nimiec is a frequent lecturer on advanced research techniques. Also contributing her expertise in tracking down information about Chicago Italian families will be Jenny Floro-Khalaf, the webmaster of [ItalianAncestry.com](http://ItalianAncestry.com) and the author of "Mount Carmel & Queen of Heaven Cemeteries." Peggy Glowacki, UIC Archival Operations Specialist, will do a presentation on new resources relating to Chicago Italians at the Daley Library. She is also expected share her research on Italian immigrant foodways.

The venerable Fr. Gino Dalpiaz will make a presentation on the impact of the Scalabrini Fathers and the Catholic Church on Chicago Italian's, a theme that weaves itself into almost all the novels, short stories and autobiographies in the field.,

Organizers are also seeking "First Voice" narrators (especially post World War II immigrants) to relate family, organizational, business, and institutional histories. Contact Candeloro at 847-951-9109 [Dominic.Candeloro@gmail.com](mailto:Dominic.Candeloro@gmail.com) [2].

The event is sponsored by the Italian Cultural Center at Casa Italia, the National Italian American Foundation, the Illinois Humanities Council, Leonard Amari, Morgan Stanley, Queens College CUNY, the Italian American Executives of Transportation, Freddy's Pizza, the Societa` Maria Santissima Lauretana, and the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans. The event is structured so as to accommodate additional sponsors and in-kind contributors for receptions and meals planned for the presenters during their three-day stay at Casa Italia.

The public is warmly invited. The Full Registration fee is \$100 and includes meals and receptions. The fee for those who can only attend for one day without meals is \$20/ day without meals. Registration cost for the three-day conference without meals is \$40; Students pay \$10/day. A limited number of Casa Italia sleeping rooms are available. Call 708-345-5933 for more information. Updated information on the conference is available at

<http://dominic.candeloro.googlepages.com/home> [3].



"Reconstructing Italians in Chicago: Twenty Authors in Search of Roots and Branches" Conference Set for May 8-10 at Casa Italia Article Originally appeared in Fra Noi April 2008

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