

Our speaker his month was Rich Venezia on “Italian-Americans: Finding Your Roots in the Old Country”. Here are summary notes from the meeting. The address of Rich’s company is www.richroots.net and you can get a set of complete notes by emailing him at rich@richroots.net.

Finding what town (comune) your ancestor came from:

Ship Manifests - Available on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, and ellisland.org. Italian women generally went by their maiden names... except when they didn’t.

Vital records - Check your state’s Dept. of Health and/or Dept. of Vital Statistics. Marriage licenses are sometimes held at county courthouses; other times at a state level.

World War I/World War II Draft Registration Cards - Available on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch; Fold3 has select states of men born between 1897 – 1927 in WWII).

Naturalization paperwork - Check with county courthouse and USCIS. USCIS record sets - Town of origin may be found in A-Files, Visa Files, AR-2 forms, C-Files. The web site is www.uscis.gov/genealogy. There is no online capability but they accept requests to search their records. Ancestry has some Petitions for Naturalization, including Pittsburgh up to the 1930’s.

OSIA (Order Sons of Italy in America) records - Records from Mass., Penn., W. Virginia, Ill., Cal.: see Card Catalog on Ancestry.com. Others are held at the IHRC:
<https://www.lib.umn.edu/ihrca>

ISDA (Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America) records - Held at Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh (Collection no. AIS.1975.16). The collection includes applications for admission from many lodges, and mortuary fund files and membership roll books for lodges all over the Pittsburgh area. www.library.pitt.edu/archives-service-center, Collection “ISDA”. Not searchable online so you must visit.

Church records may be at the church or a diocese archive. For the Pittsburgh Diocese it’s:
<http://diopitt.org/office-archives-and-record-center/information-genealogists>

Searching Italian records

FamilySearch – large collection of Italian records online: www.familysearch.org Those not online can be ordered and sent to local Family History Centers. Check the FamilySearch catalog to see what records are available for your town (comune).
www.familysearch.org/catalog/search

Il Portale Antenati: www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it/en

Select Transcribed Vital Records of Italian Towns: www.sersale.org/comunes.htm

Ancestors from Calabria? www.calabriaexchange.com/index.html

Ancestors from Trentino?

www.natitrentino.mondotrentino.net/portal/server.pt/community/indice_nati_in_trentino_-_inglese/837/nati_in_trentino/23739

Miscellaneous

Your ancestor's name was not changed at Ellis Island.

<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2013/07/02/name-changes-ellis-island>

www.wikipedia.it is a good source of information about your town. Try out your Italian reading skills, or use the translation plugins for either Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge.

Most Italian immigrants that came to America came from Southern Italy. That part of Italy started collecting civil records as early as 1815. Almost all Church records are not available online, but must be researched in person in the parish church, or more likely the provincial church archive.

This site shows where Italian last names occur today, either at the province level or within a province. It might give you some idea where your ancestors came from.

<http://www.italianames.com/italian-last-names-maps>