

Il Gazzettino

April 2018

Message from the Board

We have added a new feature to our FOISOH website, a blog by **Tommaso Gambino** titled “Italy – A Presto.” The fourth posting, “**Trastevere: Beyond the Tiber**” appeared on April 15. The fifth post titled “**Famous Sons of Rome**,” will appear on May 1. Visit our website at <http://www.friendsofitalyhawaii.org/> to view the postings.

Also don't forget our **FOISOH Annual Meeting Dinner** coming up on May 16...

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Upcoming Events

April 24: Prix Fixe Italian Dinner at Fête

May 16: FOISOH Annual Meeting Dinner



Upcoming Events: Italian Prix Fixe Dinner at Fête

Fête will host an exclusive *prix fixe* dinner of fantastic Italian cuisine and wine for 20 people in its newly-added upstairs dining space called "The Library."

This event is already sold out.

DATE: Tuesday, April 24

TIME: 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

FOISOH Annual Meeting Dinner

[Join us](#) on **Wednesday, May 16, 2018** from **5:30 to 9:30 p.m.** for our Annual Meeting Dinner at the **Koa Lanai Restaurant at the Outrigger Canoe Club!** The dinner will feature a wonderful buffet of Italian cuisine, the lovely melodies of Pierre Grill, and a convivial dining experience with members of the Friends of Italy Society of Hawai'i.

The program will include:

1. Review of club business and affairs,
2. An update on the club's progress over the last year and a look at the year ahead,
3. The election of the Board of Directors, and
4. A vote on proposed amendments to by-laws.

Member ticket price is \$45/person and non-member price is \$60/person. Ticket price for children who are 7 to 12 years old are \$20/child. Children who are 6 years old or younger are free. Drink tickets will be available for purchase at the dinner.

You can pay for your ticket either online through our website ([click here](#)) or when you arrive at the event. There will be a no-host bar so you can purchase drink tickets at the dinner.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Past (and continuing) Events

Italian Language Classes

Two Italian Language Courses - a Beginners' Course (Level 1) and Intermediate Course (Level 2) had their first class sessions on **Tuesday, April 17**. The classes will continue through May 22, 2018. The first class is a beginner's class and meets **every Tuesday** from **5:30-7:00 p.m.** (1.5 hours). The Intermediate Course meets **every Tuesday** from **7:00-8:30 p.m.** (1.5 hours). The meeting location for both classes is at the Impact Hub located at **1050 Queen Street, #100, Honolulu**.

The Beginner's course had only **one** space left as of April 17, and the Intermediate Course had **5** slots remaining.

The course costs are **\$120 for FOISOH members and \$240 for the general public**. More details and registration information can be found at: [Click here](#) to register today before the classes get fully booked! However, please be aware that you will have already missed one class session.

Please email **friendsofitalyhawaii@gmail.com** with any questions.

Course Instructor: Chiara Logli Ph. D.



Feature Story

ITALIAN SUGAR CANE WORKERS IN HAWAII

By Mark Ethridge and Sandra Perez

Polynesian explorers from islands to the south had brought sugar cane to the Hawaiian Islands along with other food crops. The first written record of sugar cane in Hawaii is by Captain James Cook as he sailed by the south side of Kauai in 1778. Cook wrote that "'We saw no wood, but what was up in the interior part of the island, except a few trees about the villages; near which, also, we could observe several plantations of plantains and sugar-canes. . . ." There was no evidence that the Hawaiians processed the cane, but rather they used it in cooking or ate it raw by simply chewing the juicy stalks.



Captain James Cook

Feature Story (cont.)

- After exploring the Pacific Northwest, Cook returned to the islands and sailed down the island chain to Maui and then Hawaii, trading with the natives for pigs, fruits, and root crops. Cook experimented with beer made from sugar as an antidote for scurvy. On December 19, 1778, writes: "Having procured a quantity of sugar-cane; and having, upon a trial, made but a few days before, found that a strong decoction of it produced a very palatable beer, I ordered some more to be brewed, for our general use. But when the cask was broached, not one of my crew would even so much as taste it." He later made the beer more a little more "palatable" with the addition of some hops. It is not clear how he got the sugar in the boiling water, but it appears the cane was pounded and mashed prior to boiling.

One of the earliest reports of sugar production in Hawaii is by an Italian named simply as "Lavinia." "Sugar was made in Honolulu about 1823, by Lavinia, an Italian, who had the cane pounded or mashed on huge wooden trays (poi boards) by natives with stone beaters, collecting the juice and boiling it in a small copper kettle."

The first commercial operation would be by Ladd & Co. at Koloa on the island of Kauai. Production would spread throughout the islands in the years to come, and by 1850, finding sufficient labor was becoming a serious problem. The sugar cane industry would first turn to the Chinese, importing them in large numbers.

Between 1850 and 1898, about 50,000 Chinese came to work in the fields, although about half would return home. However, the planters did not want the Chinese population to grow too large, and they begin seeking other nationalities to work in the cane fields. In 1878, the Japanese started to arrive in large numbers, followed by smaller numbers of Portuguese workers. With the Japanese starting to organize and demand better working conditions, and the Portuguese proving too costly to bring in (many came with families), the plantation owners looked to other sources of labor around 1900.

Feature Story (cont.)

After Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory, the island's inhabitants were viewed as another potential source of labor as well as Filipinos. It is at this time that the Hawaiian planters experimented with the idea of employing Italians, who were arriving on the U.S. East Coast in massive numbers.

.About 1900, the Dept. of Commerce suggested that a Board of Immigration agent be hired to recruit Italian immigrants in New York City to work in Hawaii's cane fields. The system was made difficult by the padrone system under which a labor contractor made all necessary arrangements for the immigrants. The high cost of travel was also a problem. Many of these agricultural workers were sent to Louisiana and it was hard for the recruiters to divert the flow to Hawaii.



Sugar cane workers in Louisiana

Feature Story (cont.)

However, approximately 1,200 Italians were hired to work in Hawaii by this method before the effort was abandoned due to the recruiting obstacles and the high cost of transportation. Some of them came under the padrone system and one such group was reported on Maui under the leadership of Eugenio del Guindice, who was fluent in English. The workers spoke no English. Guindice was reported to have come from Louisiana and understood sugar cane work. When twenty of his workers left the Kahului Railroad, plantation managers were told not to offer them work.

Another specific reference to Italians coming to Hawaii to work in the cane fields is from the pages of the *Times Picayune* of New Orleans during August and September 1901. The articles discuss the transport of sugar cane workers from Puerto Rico to the Hawaiian Islands and attempts by Hawaiian planters to recruit Italian sugar cane workers living in Louisiana.

The article mentions that a “Dr. Fulton was back in New Orleans on behalf of the HSPA (Hawaii Sugar Planters Association), not to escort Puerto Ricans, but to escort sixty Italians who had been recruited in the parishes of Franklin, Houma, and Schriever. He would take them to San Francisco and be back on August 13 to pick up another 150. The Italians who had gone with the first two groups of Puerto Ricans were working on the Spreckels Plantation [Maui]. That one plantation wanted 2,000 more Italians.”

Feature Story (cont.)



Japanese workers on Spreckels Plantation, Maui, oil on canvas painting by Joseph Dwight Strong, 1885

At one point, the *Picayune* reporter asks Fulton “Are the they [the Italians] better workers than the Porto Ricans?”

To which Dr. Fulton replies cautiously: “Yes, they are a little better workers. They are in better condition to work when they arrive in the islands. They are more accustomed to the kind of labor that is wanted in Hawaii.”

However, the HSPA would encounter some resistance from Louisiana planters in its efforts to recruit Italian workers in Louisiana. A lawyer/planter named Howell from La Fourche Parish states that he wants the Italians to remain in Louisiana:

“Ah, the Italians – they have become part of the bone and sinew of our plantation life in this state. They are valuable and have endeared themselves to the planter. I believe the general feeling in the sugar belt of this state is adverse to seeing the [Italian] removed from our midst. He has worked his way into a valued position. Therefore the call from Hawaii for 20,000 Italians is not looked upon with favor by our cane growers... I

Feature Story (cont.)

would dread to see anything like a scarcity of the Italians arise... They work faithfully; work hard, and are peaceable. You can depend on them. At the tap of the plantation's bell every mother's son of them is on deck, ready for work... The Italian wants to work. He never wants to lose a single day."

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Advertisement for the Italo-American Labor Bureau in New Orleans, Louisiana

Feature Story

The article reports that on August 21, 1901, 185 Puerto Ricans arrived in Honolulu. Albert Minvielle had come in from the Oloa plantation on the island of Hawaii to meet them and take them back with him. The Colon also delivered 32 Italian laborers (September 2, 1901).

We are unable to find any further reference to these Italian sugar cane workers in Maui. If you know of any long-time residents with Italian ancestry living on that island, please let us know. We would like to hear some of your ancestors' life stories...

In addition to the *Times Picayune* articles, the article "The Beginnings of Sugar Production in Hawaii," by Robert L. Cushing, in *The Hawaii Journal of History*, Vol. 19, 1985, was paraphrased in our article.

Announcements

Honolulu Museum of Art

Film:

A Ciambra

Showtimes:

Sunday Apr 22 04:00 PM

Tuesday Apr 24 01:00 PM

Tuesday Apr 24 07:30 PM



Location:

Doris Duke Theatre

Price:

Museum members: \$10.00

General Admission: \$12.00

About the Film:

Part of [European Cinema 2018](#).

Directed by Jonas Carpignano. Italy. 2017. 119 min. Italian with English subtitles.

Executive producer Martin Scorsese presents the electrifying sophomore feature from rising director Jonas Carpignano (*Mediterranea*), which was Italy's 2018 submission for Best Foreign Language Film. Neorealism lives in this film about Pio (Pio Amato), a 14-year-old Roma boy in an impoverished town in southern Italy. He wants nothing more than the respect of his older brother, whom he emulates—including his petty criminal ways. When Pio's father and brother are arrested, he is determined to prove that he can step up and be the head of his sprawling family. But a fateful night and a wrenching decision test just how ready he is. Steeped in the complex social fabric of the region—where Italians, Romani, and African migrants coexist in uneasy tension—*A Ciambra* is a bracing plunge into a world in which growing up fast is a matter of survival. The film won the Europa Cinema Labels Award at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival.