

In Search of a New Life. The Italians who Made California

Gianfranco Norelli (February 10, 2010)



The exhibit "In Search of a New Life" at the Museo Italo Americano, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, highlights 160 years of history of Italian immigration to California -- from 1850 to today-- through rare photographs, interactive videos, artifacts and original documents

The Italian immigrants in California and their adventurous and often surprising stories are the protagonists of an extensive and well-documented exhibit at the Museo Italo Americano in San Francisco, aptly titled "In Search of a New Life." The exhibit is the subject of a video by filmmakers Gianfranco Norelli and Suma Kurien, producers of "Pane Amaro (Bitter Bread)" a 2009 feature-length documentary on the Italian immigrant experience in the U.S.

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“California was made by Italians, and this is not an exaggeration,” this is how Paola Bagnatori, Managing Director of the Museo Italo Americano in San Francisco, describes their crucial contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the state, from agriculture to banking, from fishing to software-design.

Bagnatori, who emigrated to California from Italy with her family in 1946 at the age of 17, has worked with the Museo for over 30 years. The story of her family is one of the many stories of Italian immigrants who made their home in California.

“In Search of a New Life” was curated by Mary Serventi Steiner, Alessandro Baccari and Paolo Pontoniere. The historical consultant was anthropologist Paola Sensi-Isolani.

This exhibit at the Museo Italo Americano, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, continues through March 28, 2010. Major funding for the exhibit was provided by the E. L.Wiegand Foundation of Reno, Nevada. After San Francisco, the exhibit will travel to Reno, Canada and Italy.

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