

Local Man Links to His Italian Roots

Sunday, December 11, 2005

By Jason Subik

Staff writer

The Leader-Herald (Gloversville - Johnstown, NY)

Every morning, Peter Farina, a 5th generation Italian-American, wakes up, goes to his computer, and receives e-mails from people all over the world with one thing in common: the tiny Italian village of Guardiaregia [Province of Campobasso.]

A trip to the white pages is all it takes for Farina to connect with a first generation immigrant from Guardiaregia like John Meola, who immigrated to the United States in 1945 when he was 17 years old. Meola had never heard of Farina or his group, but within minutes of calling him, the two began chatting as "*paesani*," or townspeople.

"I think he's doing a good job. He's got a purpose, and he loves that little town," Meola said of Farina's efforts.

Farina, 21, a life-long long resident of Fultonville, is the founder of www.guardiaregia.com, a Web site devoted to linking decedents of Guardiaregia and educating them about their cultural history. The site has grown from a hobby he started as a student at Syracuse University to an organization with 250 members spanning six countries.

"I started with like 20 members, most of them friends and family," he said. *"Today I'm writing daily e-mails to people all over the world in English, Italian, and Spanish. It's a passion that has taken over my life."*

He first became fascinated with the history of his family when he was cleaning out his grandmother's attic and discovered letters written in Italian from his ancestors. He took Italian at Syracuse and in 2004, traveled to Italy to stay with his extended family in Guardiaregia; the experience transformed his life.

Farina now plans to dedicate the remainder of his days to helping link people with their Italian heritage.

To that end, Farina has indexed the citizenship records of all the Italian immigrants who have come to Montgomery County and found that 20 percent of the first 40 immigrants who files for citizenship came from Guardiaregia [starting with the first immigrant from Guardiaregia to Amsterdam, Nicola Giambattista, who immigrated to the area in the late 1860s or early 1870s.] He has [also] found descendants of people from Guardiaregia, also called "*Guardioli*," [living] throughout the local area.

Some common Guardiaregia [family] names [around the area] are Bottisti [orig. Giambattista,] Francisco [orig. De Francesco,] Galeazza, Meola, Pallotta, Sampone [orig. Sampogna,] and Vecchiarelli.

"There are Guardioli [in the area] living in Fultonville, Gloversville, Mayfield, Fonda, Tribes Hill, Schenectady, Broadalbin, Scotia, and Amsterdam [among other places,]" he said. *"The last names are so rare [in the area] that if you have one in your family you are likely a Guardiolo"*

Farina owns several Websites and other not-for-profit enterprises including "*The Montgomery County Italian Association*" (www.ItaliansOfAmsterdam.com) and "*MondoGuardiaregia*," (www.Guardiaregia.com) [the] website dedicated to linking descendants of people from [his town of origin] together around the world. His ultimate ambition is to create the world's foremost Italian Web site (www.italyMONDO.com), published in multiple languages, with the goal of linking every Italian with their roots.



Peter Farina speaks about [his passion for] the Italian culture and accepts an award from his town of Guardiaregia [at the annual "*Festa di Guardiaregia*" in Toronto two weeks ago.]