

L'ITALO-AUSTRALIANO
AUSTRALIA'S FIRST ITALIAN LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER

by
Francesca A. Musicò

Francesca Musicò is a PhD student in the Department of History, University of Sydney and a Committee member of Co.As.It. Italian Heritage and Italian Family History Group.

A recent initiative of Co.As.It. Italian Heritage, Sydney, working with the State Library of New South Wales, was to bring a microfilm copy of *L'Italo-Australiano* to Australian shores.

L'Italo-Australiano, which appeared between January and July 1885 in Sydney, was the first Italian-language newspaper to be published in Australia. It was intended to be a political paper and contains much comment on European politics. The existence of the newspaper was made known through the meticulous research carried out by scholars Gianfranco Cresciani and Gaetano Rando.¹ Unfortunately, there are no known surviving copies of the newspaper in Australia. Hence, the microfilmed copy is of paramount importance.

The founder of *L'Italo-Australiano*, Francesco Sceusa, returned to Italy in 1908 and donated the newspaper along with his personal papers to the Biblioteca Fardelliana in his home town of Trapani, Sicily. The Biblioteca Fardelliana kindly gave permission to Co.As.It. and the State Library of New South Wales to produce a microfilm of the newspaper from their collection. *L'Italo-Australiano* complements the extensive pre-Second World War Italian language newspaper collection deposited at the State Library, which includes *Uniamoci* (1903-4), *L'Italo-Australiano* (1905-9),² *Oceania* (1913-15), *The Italo-Australian* (1922-1940) and *Il Giornale Italiano* 1932-1940).³

Francesco Sceusa, journalist and land surveyor, was born in 1851. He was a committed socialist who was forced to flee Italy for his attacks on corrupt administrators, arriving in Sydney in 1877. In Italy, Sceusa had edited the fervently socialist publication *Lo Scarafaggio* [The Scarab]. Soon after his arrival Sceusa became involved in the emerging Australian socialist movement, representing Australia in 1893 at the International Socialist Congress in Switzerland in his capacity as secretary of the Socialist Democratic Federation.⁴ Out of his socialist ideals and strong beliefs of the need to improve

the plight of Italian workers in Australia, Sceusa established in 1890 the *Società Operaia Italiana-Mutuo Soccorso* [The Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Society of NSW]. In 1892, Sceusa described Sydney's Italians as 'hundreds of little Italian slaves who, as musicians and flower vendors, haunt our streets working under stern compulsion for cruel masters, starved, ill-clad, and beaten almost to death'.⁵ Sceusa publicised the exploitative nature of contracted migrants, particularly fuelled by the arrival of 333 Italians on the ship *Jumna* in 1891 as a substitute for Kanakas to work on the sugar cane plantations of North Queensland.⁶ A prolific pamphlet writer advocating the socialist cause, Sceusa's intention was to radicalise and unite Sydney's conservative Italian community.⁷

Consisting of only six issues, *L'Italo-Australiano* provides vital information on the nature of Sydney's small Italian community during the 1880s. In 1881 there were 521 Italians living throughout the State of New South Wales, with approximately 200 residing in Sydney.⁸ The Italian community comprised professionals, entrepreneurs and importers. The newspaper's advertisements give an important insight into the many Italian businesses operating in Sydney. The first issue dated 12 January 1885 records G. B. Modini's gun shop in George Street, G. Guazzini's bakery and *biscotteria* in Crown Street and Charles Carugati's butchery in Oxford Street. Clockmaking and jewellery-making appears to be the domain of the Priora Brothers and Antonio Pugliese; both had their establishments in Park Street. Italians were also publicans with Oscar Mayer operating the Carter's Hotel on the corner of George and Park Streets and G.B. Bassetti running the Solferino Hotel in Paddington. A large number of advertisements were placed in the paper by A. Ferrari & Co of George Street, importers of food delicacies. Wines, spirits, olive oil, spaghetti and vermicelli, Parmesan cheese, *funghi secchi* [dried mushrooms], Bologna mortadella and salami were some of the products imported from Italy. Ferrari & Co. also sold colonial wines produced in the Hunter Valley and in Albury.

AVVERTENZE
Gli abbonati hanno la facoltà di poter contribuire materia letteraria al giornale; e i loro articoli o corrispondenze saranno pubblicati, qualora d'interesse pubblico, e a seconda le convenienze. Gli anonimi si rifiutano. I manoscritti non si restituiscono.

PER GLI ANNUNZI E INSERZIONI
Dirigersi per favore al Sig. C. Carpena
526 Bourke St. Surry Hills, Sydney.
O personalmente alle stesse al Club Italiano.

PREZZI
Annunzi in 8ª Pagina - in ragione di 2s per pollice (un tratto di colonna un pollice largo) per intere colonne e annunzi annuali da stabilirsi - Inserzioni o comunicazioni nel corpo del giornale in ragione di 6d per ogni 12 parole.

CARTER'S HOTEL

SUL CANTO DI GEORGE & PARK ST.



CARTER'S HOTEL
DIRIMPETTO IL TOWN-
-HALL

Chi soffre del mal di Patria gli sarà di refrigerio il fermarsi sul Canto di George e Park Streets, Carter's Hotel e indi far due passi in dentro e bere un bicchiere di Vino Coloniale buono tanto da figurarsi d'essere in Italia

Stante l'immenso spaccio, la Birra che si mesce nel mio locale è preparata espressamente, cosicchè in nessuna parte di Sydney si può bere un bicchiere di birra da paragonarsi in bontà alla mia.

3d



3d

Tutti i liquori che si servono nel mio locale sono importati direttamente. Sicchè mi trovo in posizione da offrire generi di 1ª qualità a 3d il bicchiere. Il mio Rum, Whiskey, Brandy, ecc. ecc. sono rinomati per tutta la città e a coloro che ancora non lo sanno una sola visita al mio stabilimento basterà per farli diventare assidui clienti.

CARTER'S HOTEL
George & Park Streets

Il Proprietario:
O. W. MEYER

A. FERRARI & CO

Negoziante di Vini, Spiriti &c &c
Importatori di Generi Italiani

CANTINA DI VINI AUSTRALIANI VARI

ITALIAN DELICACIES

Maccheroni, Spaghetti, Vermicelli, ecc.
Formaggi: Parmigiano, Gruyere, ecc.
Salami di Bologna, Milano, ecc.
Tonno, Ventresca, Sardelle, Acciughe
Funghi secchi - alla stufata - all'olio.

Torrioni
Conserva di Pomodoro - SIGARI VIRGINIA, TOSCANI, CAVOUR, ETC.

VINI ITALIANI

Marsala, Barbera, Barolo, Grignolino, Nebiolo, Malvasia, Chianti, Falerno Lacryma Christi, Asti Spumante, ecc.
Vermouth di Torino e Fernet Branca

OLII D' OLIVA

Lucca, Garantito Genuino (*)(**)(***)
Sicilia, Nizza & Genova

BRANDY, RUM, WHISKY, GIN
ACQUAVITE, ACQUA DI CEDRO

STOUT, ALE, LAGER BEER
Liqueurs

A. Ferrari & Co. sono i soli italiani in Sydney che possono offrire le migliori qualità di Vini Coloniali.

li HUNTER RIVER Albury, ecc. ecc.
Raccomandando il loro speciale "Vino Belford" per Pasto

Note the Address:

A. FERRARI & CO. Wine Merchants
Importers of Italian Goods

382 George St.
Sydney

G. B. MODINI

602 (già 610) George Street

ARMERIA E COLTELLERIA
Importatore d'Armi bianche e da fuoco

Con annesso Ospizio dove ogni lavoro è ripulito e eseguito colla massima esattezza e finezza.

Il Sig. G. B. Modini è il solo depositario e rappresentante del

FERNET

FRATELLI BRANCA - MILANO

Fratelli Priora

Sydney - 48 1/2 Park St Sydney

GIOIELLIERI, INCISORI, OROLOGIAI,
SMALTATORI, LAPIDARI IN PIETRE FINE

Ogni ordine eseguito nel più alto stile d'arte, Rec. 21 ore.

ANTONIO PUGLIESE

58 Park Street

Orologiaio-Gioielliere
Si eseguisce qualunque lavoro in Oro, metalli & Barometri, ed altri lavori meccanici.
58 Park St - Sydney

616 Crown Street - Sydney
Surry Hills

G. Guazzini

Panetteria & Biscatteria
I carri girano qualunque rione della Città. Parte giornalmente di domicilio.

Charles Carugati 181 Oxford St
Wholesale & Retail Family Butcher

Le migliori qualità di Carne che si possono avere in questo Mercato.

181 Oxford St - Oppos. Kidman's

LEANDRO GALAZZINI

Pensione Italiana
BOARD AND RESIDENCE
57 Goulburn Street

I migliori Vini Coloniali trovansi a medesimi prezzi.

Solferino Hotel

Prop. - G. B. BASSETTI
ANGOLO DI ELIZABETH & SUTHERLAND ST.
PADDINGTON

Birre e liquori scelti. Prezzi moderatissimi.
Bigliardi &c &c
Grande vista della Valle di Moreland e Puckotters Bay.

Published as a Specimen by C. Carpena
526, Bourke St. Surry Hills, Sydney

The newspaper documents the presence of Italian artists in the 1880s commissioned to execute public works in Sydney. The first issue records Tommaso Sani's completion of the Mercury statue on the *Evening News*' building in Market Place and Achille Simonetti's work on the Colonial Secretary's building.⁹ The issue of 6 June records Simonetti's completion of a bust of George Allen MLC and a visit to Augusto Lorenzini's Phillip Street studio. Italians were also involved with opera productions. Signor Majeroni had an opera house in Sydney and Chiarini's Italian circus was touring at the time of publication.

The paper also records the celebrations held at Sydney's *Club Italiano Democratico* for the third anniversary of Giuseppe Garibaldi's death.¹⁰ Sceusa was one of the major organisers of this event. Speeches were made by Drs Fiachi and Marano, sculptor Del Vescovo and signori Guazzini, Pisoni and Modini. A meeting held at Meyer's Carter's Hotel to devise an Italian Legion in the event of the colony's invasion is also recorded in the 6th June issue of the paper.

Together with Cesare Carpena, Francesco Sceusa published *L'Italo-Australiano* from the premises of the Italian Club at 526 Bourke Street, East Sydney. After only six months, the newspaper folded. The reasons were twofold. Firstly, Sceusa was transferred by the Department of Lands to Orange. Secondly, the Italian community was too dispersed throughout New South Wales and such distance prevented the newspaper's economic feasibility. It took nearly twenty years for another Italian-language newspaper to appear in 1903. *Uniamoci* was also founded by political exiles and short-lived. ■

Notes

¹ Gianfranco Cresciani, 'The Making of a New Society: Francesco Sceusa and the Italian Intellectual Reformers in Australia 1876-1905', in J. Hardy (ed.) *Stories of Australian Migration*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp. 83-98; Gaetano Rando, 'Aspects of the History of the Italian Language Press in Australia 1885-1985', in G. Rando & M. Arrighi (eds.), *Italians in Australia - Historical and Social Perspectives*, Department of Languages (Romance), University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 1993, pp. 197-214.

² This paper bears no relation to the 1885 version. It was published by Count Giovanni Pullè. See Catherine Dewhurst, 'Symbolic Ethnic Identity Through an Italian Family Heritage', *Convivio*, Vol. 3, No. 2, October 1997, pp. 149-159.

³ On Italian-language newspapers see Robert Pascoe, 'The Italian Press in Australia', A. Wade Ata & C.

Ryan (eds.), *The Ethnic Press in Australia*, Academia Press & Footprint Publications, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 201-206.

⁴ Gianfranco Cresciani, *Migrants or Mates: Italian Life in Australia*, Knockmore Enterprises, Sydney, 2000, pp. 25-29.

⁵ 'Signor Sceusa', *Truth*, 17 January 1892, p. 5.

⁶ For further reading on this episode, refer to Ferrando Galassi, *Sotto la Croce del Sud - The Jumna Immigrants of 1891*, Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, Townsville, 1891.

⁷ Verity Burgmann, *In Our Time - Socialism and the Rise of Labour, 1885-1905*, George, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p. 52. For example, the following pamphlets by Sceusa in the Mitchell Library; *Hail Australia!*, Jarrett & Co., Sydney, 1888, and *The Glorious House of Savoy - The Socialists Tribute to the Memory of Humbert I*, Co-operative Printing Works, Sydney, 1900.

⁸ N.O. Pyke, 'An Outline of Italian Immigration into Australia', *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XX, No. 3, September 1948, p. 101.

⁹ On these artists see F.A. Musicò, *Italian Art and Artists in Late Nineteenth Century Sydney*, B.A. (Hons.) Thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1998 (Copy available at the State Library of New South Wales and at the Italian Historical Society, Melbourne).

¹⁰ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 5 June 1885, p. 1. Commemoration of Garibaldi's death began in Sydney in 1882. See R. Pesman Cooper, 'Communication - Garibaldi and Australia', *Teaching History*, Vol. 16, part 3, October 1982, pp. 62-67.

The launch of the *L'Italo-Australiano* was held on June 19, 2002 at 'Casa d'Italia' in Leichhardt. Well known author Anna Maria Dell'Oso officiated the launch and spoke about her experience as a journalist, as well as the importance of newspapers as historic evidence. Historian Gianfranco Cresciani discussed the Life of Francesco Sceusa and the establishment of the newspaper. Linda Nellor, Coordinator of Co.As.It. Italian Heritage, and Francesca Musicò gave a brief illustrated survey on the contents of *L'Italo-Australiano*. Diana Richards of the State Library of NSW, spoke of how the newspaper complements the extensive pre-Second World War Italian-language newspaper collection held at the State Library. The launch proved to be a success with over 70 guests attending.

If you are interested in purchasing a CD-Rom of *L'Italo-Australiano*, please contact Linda Nellor at linda.nellor@coasit.org.au - Telephone on 02 9564 0744 or Francesca Musicò at fmus0991@mail.usyd.edu.au