
Reviews

Finding Your Italian Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide. By Suzanne Russo Adams. Published by Ancestry; 360 West 4800 North; Provo, UT; 2008. ISBN 978-1-59331-324-1. viii, 189 pp. Appendixes, bibliography, illustrations, index. Paperback. \$19.95.

This helpful guide joins few others on this subject commendably updating resources for Italian research. In nine chapters Adams describes methodology, records (both online and on-site), and differences in records over time. Peppered with illustrations and examples, the book instructs Italian researchers of all levels.

Using the tenet of working from the known to the unknown, from the present into the past, Adams advises gathering any published information and interviewing family members before selecting a research goal. Advice for this phase includes sound tips like "Research One Generation at a Time" (p. 8) and "Search for Entire Families" (p. 9).

Researching Italians in the United States means paying close attention to neighbors and associates who may be relatives or *paesani* (fellow countrymen). Italian culture places a high value on "la familia," requiring Italian researchers to be aware of who surrounds their research subject.

Squeezing these relationships from American census, immigration, military, and naturalization records along with

other sources should lead to a better understanding of the subjects and their families and associates. It also may reveal the place of origin. Adams's descriptions and illustrations are helpful, but her tips on how Italian names and pronunciation could have been misunderstood or Americanized are particularly useful.

Draft registrations for World War I (1917–18) and World War II (1942—fourth registration, "the old man's draft") contain records of immigrants, whether naturalized or not. Adams points out the value of finding World War I records and where to find them, but she omits World War II records. Both have important personal information, including age or date and place of birth.

Finding the place of origin or *comuni* is essential for Italian research. Adams's geographic chapter not only includes maps but also Internet and other search strategies. She illustrates various records created before and after the 1866 unification of Italy, including ecclesiastical records.

Records may be accessible but reading them may take practice. Adams's language discussion includes handwriting samples and common abbreviations.

State archives may have military, notarial and court records, passports, tax and census lists, university and school records, land records, and maps. Of special interest to researchers are conscription

lists, which give personal information and annotations for men who died or immigrated before age eighteen. Adams gives good advice on preparing for a visit to the archives housing these records.

Adams's discussion of online resources gives Web sites that can be tapped for general knowledge, history and culture, surname distributions, geography, civil and church repositories, and research. The necessarily limited number of Web sites is a good cross-section that will give readers starting places for research and historical information.

The appendixes include a useful glossary of general terms, occupations, and dates and numbers; an Italian history timeline; sample letters; societies both in America and abroad; and research resources which include tips on how to hire professional researchers. They list conferences and seminars; however the reference to Repeat Performance is out of date—it last recorded a genealogical conference in 2004. Adams offers a concise beginner's guide for Italian research that includes modern resources and traditional research methodology.

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Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History. By Donna M. DeBlasio, Charles F. Ganzert, David H. Mould, Stephen H. Paschen, and Howard L. Sacks. Published by Swallow Press; Ohio University Press; 19 Circle Drive; The Ridges; Athens, OH; 45701; 2009; <http://www.ohioswallow.com>. ISBN 978-0-8040-1116-7. xii, 218 pp. Illustrations, index, photographs. Hardback. \$26.95.

This guide reflects the authors' multi-year teaching collaboration in an annual oral-history institute. They provide a practical set of oral-history skills for anyone planning to research community history.

The book addresses a broad set of oral-history topics. These include planning and obtaining funding, interviewing and transcription, ethics and legal issues, technical aspects of sound and video recording, and presenting and archiving the results.

Budding oral historians will discover thoughtful discussion, examples, and basic guidelines for projects. The book is geared to organizing and directing a project, and it is suitable for hands-on volunteer or student workshops. *Catching Stories* has no general bibliography, and some chapters lack notes to direct beginners toward more extensive study.

The discussion of ethics and legal issues is particularly useful for novices. Covering human-subject issues and copyright idiosyncrasies in some detail, it provides sample release forms.

Valuable sections on project planning and funding emphasize focusing the project and keeping that focus throughout interviews. The authors briefly mention evaluation as a necessary feature of a grant proposal, but they miss a chance to explain the role measurable goals can play in providing project focus and feedback.

Technical chapters contain guidance on transcription, interviewing, and audio and video recording, and avoiding common pitfalls of interviewing. The work features an interesting discussion of the interview as transaction and narrative. It describes transcription as a process involving choices to balance accuracy and readability.

The authors discuss current digital media choices in a context of the physics of picture and sound. The technical detail is dry, but the information allows readers to make informed choices despite the swift pace of technological change. Specific examples of what the authors refer to as “consumer” versus “professional” equipment would be welcome additions. One chapter contains a practical explanation of the optimal setup and operation of cameras and microphones.

The book addresses the conversion of old analog tapes to digital media and the preservation of digital recordings. A section on presentation options contains examples of exhibits and publications, including PDFs, podcasts, and traditional media. Given the book’s helpful references to contemporary technology, an accompanying Web page or blog could effectively launch oral history into the digital age.

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The Baylors of Newmarket: The Decline and Fall of a Virginia Planter Family. By Thomas Katheder. Published by iUniverse; 1663 Liberty Drive; Bloomington, IN 47403; <http://www.iuniverse.com>; 2009. ISBN 978-1-4401-2992-6. xix, 277 pp. Appendix, illustrations, index. Paperback. \$31.95.

The Baylors of Newmarket focuses on a family of colonial Caroline County, Virginia, particularly Col. John Baylor III (1705–72), successful tobacco plantation farmer and book collector, and his son John Baylor IV (1750–1808). The life of the latter—from his experiences at the

University of Cambridge and later visits to England and France to his adventures during the Revolutionary War, his later activities as tobacco planter, horse breeder and book collector, his dream of sponsoring an extraordinary estate for his family, and his death insolvent and in debtor’s prison—forms the greater part of this study.

This book is highly recommended to persons interested in the lives and activities of the wealthy, but not always successful, Virginia planters of the late eighteenth century. It is not intended to be, and is not, a genealogy of the Baylor family. The detailed examination of the books collected by John Baylor IV, evidently one of the finest in the colony, alone justifies this monograph’s publication.

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Colony of Connecticut: Minutes of the Court of Assistants, 1669–1711. Transcribed and indexed by Helen Schatvet Ullmann. Published by New England Historic Genealogical Society; 101 Newbury Street; Boston, MA; 02116-3007; 2009. ISBN 978-0-88082-227-5. 707 pp. Glossary, index. Hardback. \$34.95.

There is an unspoken assumption that colonists, particularly in New England, led God-fearing lives following a moral compass reset every Sunday (and often on Wednesday) in their churches. Consequently, finding many of them in judicial records can be stunning. The men who served as justices often stood as plaintiffs or defendants.

The highest court in colonial Connecticut heard not just criminal pro-

ceedings, especially capital crimes, but also all divorces and appeals in all other matters. A majority of cases represent appeals from local-court decisions involving money, business, or land. Disputes due to high-status families' business activities frequently brought such people to the high court.

In 1928 the Connecticut Historical Society and the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut published Book Number A of the Particular Court and included earlier records originally published as General Court, i.e., legislative, records in the Colonial Records series. Ullman's transcriptions of volumes 3 and 4 of Hartford County Court records—into which Assistants Court records were mingled—were published in 2005. The present publication covers volumes 53 and 58 of Connecticut's Early General Records.

Despite the original volumes' confused archival numbering, the three publications form a sequential record of the high court from 1639 to 1711. Ullmann provides a succinct, full, and accurate account of the records in this transcription and where the originals are located. She points out only the first of the two transcribed volumes has been microfilmed.

The transcription conforms to the original spelling and abbreviations, shows the original page breaks and repetition of the break word on both pages, and preserves the thorn. It does not, however, preserve commas and periods, which were confusingly used.

Ullman inserts commas into name lists originally in column or table format. The introduction carefully lists her editorial decisions.

Easy to read, the publication uses boldface for a name's first appearance in

a case. A glossary interprets Latin and historic legal terms.

The court records provide names of judges, plaintiffs, and defendants, the cause, and the determinations. Criminal offenses generally involved juries, grand juries providing an indictment and petit juries providing judgment. The original volumes exclude extensive witness testimony and repetitious paperwork.

This transcription indexes and covers all treason, divorce, rape, murder, and incest cases in the colony during forty-three years. Comparing the earlier and later cases provides insight into the evolution of colonists' attitudes. The book could be the start of a statistical framework for a deeper and more complete historical understanding of crime in colonial Connecticut.

The high court records for the colony of Connecticut are essential to understanding its residents' criminal and business activities and the public service of many judges and jury members. The transcriber and indexer has performed a worthy service in bringing these records to us in a reliable and useful format.

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Searching for Ichabod: His Eighteenth-Century Diary Leads Me Home. By Julie Foster Van Camp. Published by BookSurge Publishing; Walden West Resources; 2089 Baker View Road; Lopez Island, WA; 98261; <http://www.searchingforichabod.com>; 2009. ISBN 9781439221754. x, 231 pp. Bibliography, illustrations, maps. Paperback. \$13.99 (shipping: \$2.95).

Weaving historical narrative with a personal journey of discovery creates an attractive reading experience. Author Van Camp's twenty-year search for her early Foster ancestors succeeds with gifts possible only with today's technology.

Queries left on Internet message boards over a period of years produced replies in 1997 and 2001 from two women, unknown to one another. Each had a copy of original diaries written by Ichabod Foster, a great-great-great grandfather and primary subject of Van Camp's search.

One diary covered his rural Vermont life from 1785 to 1809. The second chronicled 1809 through 1813, the final years of his life spent in a small town in western New York.

Spurred on by this serendipity, Van Camp embarked on a road trip to recapture the past and discover Ichabod's final resting place. An experienced journalist, the author skillfully blends historical research with family history as she wends her way back in time. Many of Ichabod's

abodes have yet to succumb to extensive modern development, allowing the author and reader to experience the same scenery, smells, and sounds familiar to him two centuries ago.

Excerpts from the diaries illuminate Ichabod's life. The reader can almost see and hear the diarist as he stoically and simply describes his days, and months, and years. Endnotes and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book document the supporting sources and repositories, leaving the story to flow smoothly in a style that is both engaging and educational.

Since the book's recent publication, a Web site updates readers on continuing projects including an archaeological dig to locate Ichabod's grave. This book may allow readers with contemporary rural New England ancestors to find themselves more closely connected to their own family history.

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