

The Consulate General of Italy in Philadelphia

A Bridge between Two Cultures

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The history of the Consulate General of Italy in Philadelphia provides us with knowledge of the place of government agencies in the lives of Italians in an American city as well as a better understanding of diplomatic relations between Italy and the United States. From its early origins to today, it has not only served as an agency for commercial, scientific, scholarly and artistic programs, but also as an influence on the continued identity and cohesion of Italians and Italian Americans as a community.

[The PreUnification Period \(1820-1859\)](#)

[Unification and the new Kingdom \(1859-1880\)](#)

[The Era of Mass Immigration \(1881-1921\)](#)

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The PreUnification Period (1820-1859) Even during the years prior to the founding of Italy as a unified and sovereign nation state, several of the various political domains of the peninsula sent or appointed representatives to represent their interests in the young United States. Beginning with Goffredo Deabbate in 1820, the Kingdom of Sardinia had a consular office in Philadelphia. Succeeded by Chevalier Ignazio Vincenzo Cavaradosy five years later, it was a relatively quiet period of diplomatic relations, perhaps made somewhat notable by the presence of Angelo Garibaldi, the brother of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the great military leader of later years, as Vice Consul. When Angelo Garibaldi died in 1835 in this city, his last will identified his friendship with Domenico Morelli, serving as the Consul General of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. At almost the same time, the Holy See had appointed Giovanni Battista Sartori, a local resident, who would also serve in Rome as the U.S. Consul to the Papal States at the same time.

Unification and the new Kingdom (1859-1880) With the early success of the Risorgimento, the new Kingdom of Italy recognized [Alonzo Viti](#), a Philadelphia merchant and scion of a distinguished family from Volterra as its Acting Consul in the city. Viti also assumed a very influential role within the early immigrant colony, particularly by his efforts to eliminate the exploitation of "slave children" as street musicians by padrone masters. In 1876, the Kingdom of Italy appointed [Count Goffredo Galli](#)

as its first official Consul in Philadelphia. Galli joined with Viti on many occasions, such as the mourning observances after the death of King Victor Emmanuel II, as well as in continuing the struggle to protect the exploited children and other vulnerable immigrants on their arrival and adjustment to Philadelphia.

The Era of Mass Immigration (1881-1921) With mass immigration, the Consulate, under the leadership of Baron [Nicola Squitti](#) appointed as the second Royal Consul in 1884, assumed the responsibility to provide a haven of hope for new arrivals in a strange land. While controversy swirled over the so-called “padrone system” and opposition to immigration began mounting, Squitti led the Italian community in observing the Unification of Italy at its annual celebration on the 20th of September, thus enabling Italians to retain their identity, even while they were evolving towards a newer sense of being Italian Americans. By 1890, [Annabile Raybaudi Massiglia](#), having succeeded Squitti as Consul, continued to lead his office in preserving the patrimony of Italy within immigrant communities, to protect the interests of their members as individuals, and to support the development of their community resources – especially during the time of crisis precipitated by the lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans, which momentarily shattered diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Italy and nearly brought the two countries to war. In the “Gilded Age” at the end of the 19th century, under Acting Counsel [William Slaviz](#), then Consul [Giulio M. Lecca](#), and [Count Angelo Dall’Aste Brandolini](#) (appointed in 1899), Consular services often involved the protection of Italians whose rights appeared to have been violated as well as settling the factionalism which sometimes divided and disrupted the Italian community. In 1900, with the appointment of [Gerolamo Naselli](#) as Royal Consul, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also elevated the Philadelphia office to the status of a first class Consulate with an expanded jurisdiction over Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. With the great growth of the volume of immigration, the office remained preoccupied with the turbulent affairs of the huge Italian population throughout the consular district. But in 1905, it also turned attention toward facilitating relief efforts for the earthquake victims of Calabria, an undertaking that would be repeated with similar tragedies in Sicily as elsewhere – including San Francisco – in later years.

When [Giacomo Fara Forni](#) arrived in 1906, Philadelphia’s Italians turned out in massive numbers to greet their new Consul, as they would on other occasions to celebrate Italy’s emergence as a modern nation – as well as to renew their ties with their homeland. But while Little Italy had emerged as a strong and enduring local entity, the Consulate still exercised much effort against hostility directed toward Italians as well as

internal disputes initiated by community leaders. With an increasing emphasis upon naturalization as a precondition for employment, the role of the Consulate evolved further as it addressed the challenge of assimilation — how could Italians remain Italian while becoming Americans. In 1909, [Count Luigi Aldrovandi](#), now serving as Royal Consul, joined Philadelphia's mayor and other officials in celebrating Columbus Day as an official holiday, but also in extolling the contributions of Italians to their adopted nation. [Count Luigi Provana del Sabbione](#) arrived as the next Royal Consul on the eve of the First Italian Congress on Immigration, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, and signifying the importance of Philadelphia in March 1909. By the time of the succession of [Giulio Cesare Maioni](#) as Consul two years later, however, the Italian government had shifted its priorities in response to international politics, which would soon become manifested by Italy's war with Turkey in 1911 and then entry into the Great War in 1915.

From that point until the end of the war, [Gaetano Emilio Poccardi](#) would oversee the interests of Italy as Consul, especially during the difficult mobilization of reservists from among the immigrant population in Philadelphia. With the eventual Allied victory, Poccardi took a conspicuous part in the ensuing celebrations, but was soon to be replaced by [Guglielmo Silenzi](#), who would serve only a brief period. In 1921, [Luigi Sillitti](#) previous experience as assistant to the Commission General of Emigration, made him particularly suited for Philadelphia, where the Consulate faced an estimated 200,000 in the "Italian" population. The enormous celebration accorded by the entire city to the visit of General Armando Diaz, the leader of Italy's armed forces at the end of war, probably provided the apex of the period in November 1919.

The Darkness before the Dawn (1922-1945) Sillitti's departure in 1922 also marked the end of a long era of amicable relations which would soon be succeeded by an increasing estrangement with the rise of Fascism. But it also be reflected in the restrictive immigration policy imposed by new legislation in the 1920s by which the United States effectively turned its back on its former Ally in the recent war. With the outbreak of World War II, and old friends finding themselves as enemies — the U. S. Government froze Italian assets, forbade Italians from leaving American shores, required them as enemy aliens to come under State Department surveillance and closed their consulates. Although the state of belligerency between Italy and the U.S. lasted only two years, Italian consulates remained closed for six years, before finally being reopened in 1947 — with [Corrado Orlandi Contucci](#) being named as Consul in Philadelphia.

The Present (1946-2012) With the return of peace, after a surge of Italian immigration in the two decades before the further reform of American immigration policy, the relationship of Italy and the United States – as economic, scientific, academic, political, and military partners – has become stronger than ever before. And while the descendants of the thousands of Italian immigrants who chose to make their lives in the United States have become even more Americanized, the Consulate General of Italy in Philadelphia (until 1991 located at the 2128 Locust St. historical site), as in other jurisdictions, remains an important conduit in preserving the linkage of all Italians with their ancestral homeland as well as maintaining the solidarity of their communal life. In an increasingly more globalized world, through its program of material services and cultural exchange, the Consulate (from 1993 to the present located at 150 South Independence Mall West) further strengthen the ties of cooperation between Italy and the United States while it also facilitates the retention and revitalizing of transnational identity. After a series of distinguished appointees, Dr. Andrea Canepari currently serves as the Consul General of Italy.

Italian Consuls and Vice Consuls at Philadelphia (1870-2009)

Alonzo M. Viti, unofficial, honorary consul (1864-1876)

Count Goffredo Galli (1876-1884)

Count Nicola Squitti di Palermiti e Guarna (1884-1889)

Count Annabile Raybaudi Massiglia (1889-1895)

Guglielmo Slaviz, acting consul (1894-1897)

Carlos Filippo Serra (1895-1896)

Giulio M. Lecca (1896-1899)

Angelo Dall'Aste Brandolini (1899-1902)

Count Girolamo Naselli (1902-1906)

Angelo Dall'Aste Brandolini, Vice Consul (1902-1906)

Giacomo Fara Forni (1906-1909)

Luigi Villari Vice Consul (1907-1909)

Count Luigi Aldrovandi Marescotti (1909-1911)

Count Luigi Provana del Sabbione, Vice Consul (1909-1911)

Giuseppe Gentile, Vice Consul (1910-1912)

Meriggio Serrati, Vice Consul (1910-1911)

Giulio Cesare Majoni (1911-1914)

Nobile Carlo dei Marchesi de Constantin di Châteauneuf, Vice Consul (1912-1913)

Gaetano Emilio Poccardi (1914-1921)

Guido deVincenzo, Vice Consul (1915-1923)

Giuseppe Gentile, in charge of the Consulate (1917)
Guglielmo Silenzi (1920-1921)

Luigi Sillitti (1921-1926)
Armando Salati, Honorary Vice Consul (1924-1940)
Vittorio Siciliani, (1926-1928)
Mario Orsini Ratto (1928-1929)
Agostino Ferrante dei Marchesi di Ruffano (1929-1932)
Giovanni Maria Pio Margotti (1932-1936)
Edoardo Pervan (1937-1939)
Ludovico Censi (1939-1942)
Suspension of consular services (1942-1947)
Corrado Orlandi Contucci (1947)

Silvio E. Daneo (1949-1951)
Ludovico Barattieri di San Pietro (1951-1956)
Giovanni Lucioli (1956-1959)
Edgardo Sogno Rata del Vallino (1959-1961)
Gian Piero Nuti (1961-1967)
Antonio Carloni (1967-1972)
Letterio Carlo, acting consul (1972-1973)
Filippo Anfuso (1973-1975)
Onofrio Solari Bozzi (1975-1978)
Giancarlo Riccio (1980-1982)
Giuseppe Cassini (1982-1987)
Luca del Balzo di Presenzano (1987-1990)
Franco Giordano (1990-1993)
Valentino Simonetti (1993-1997)
Anna della Croce di Dojola Brigante Colonna (1997-2000)
Lorenzo Mott (2000-2004)
Stefano Mistretta (2004-2008)
Luigi Scotto (2009-2013)
Andrea Canepari (incumbent)