



In the Beginning...

These first three words from the bible help us understand creation. Everything has a beginning and for the Sons of Italy it happened when a pharmacist, attorney, sculptor, two barbers and a doctor came together. Each were from different regions of Italy but that didn't matter because,

“we are first and foremost Italians.” “The majority of us have come to these shores as the poorest of all Italians, and the least educated of most of Europe...we are also the most courageous for having made the decision to come here...not to find a new life, but to earn a better one.”

In the beginning we gathered to, “become a very important part of American history.” And this was to be accomplished through education. “We must...insist that our children receive the best and highest education possible.” “One of our most important objectives should be to reclaim the rest of our family left behind and...to keep in mind that our presence in this great country, who has received so many of us, we must enhance its greatness at all times.

The first Sons of Italy Lodge founded June 22, 1905, was Lodge #1, was named after Mario Rapisardi an Italian poet and supporter of Risorgimento (Italy's unification). Rapisardi was a professor of literature at the University of Catania where he wrote philosophical and historical narrative poems which reconciled science and religion. He felt his duty was to express things as they are and represent reality as he sees and feels it, with complete sincerity, with heat and with the color of his soul. “*Love truth more than glory, more than peace, more than life. Make it your sword and your shield.*” Mario Rapisardi died seven years after the Sons of Italy in America Lodge was founded bearing his name. His funeral attracted over 150,000 people.

Today our missions include encouraging the study of Italian language and culture in American schools and universities; preserving Italian American traditions, culture, history, and heritage; and promoting closer cultural relations between the United States and Italy.

I guess we could say the Sons and Daughters of Italy in America has come full circle where we now have a Chapter in Palermo, Lodge 3009, which is named after the founder of the Sons of Italy, Vincenzo Sellaro. Dr. Sellaro's vision for Italians to become a very important part of American history has been exceeded. We continue his call to promote education where OSDIA members have given **tens of millions of dollars** to educational programs, disaster relief, cultural advancement, and medical research. Dr. Sellaro knew the importance of family and wanted everyone to be together. The OSDIA is one big Italian family who gather and celebrate everything it means to be Italian. Lastly, he wanted us to enhance the greatness of America and as members of the Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, we exemplify *the very best of what it is to be Italian American*. Thank you, Dr. Sellaro, for sharing your vision and compassion, and allowing us to continue your worthy mission.