



Italian American Heritage Club Of Hunterdon County

KEEPING OUR *Pride*, CELEBRATING OUR *Culture*, REMEMBERING OUR *Past*

Program Notes for January: New Jersey's Treasure Trove of Italian and Italian- American History

Did you know that the first Italian-American elected to public office in the United States did so here in Hunterdon County in the early 1700s? To find out who this individual was you'll surely want to attend our January meeting where Robert Immordino, a historian from Lawrence, NJ, will shed light on how New Jersey has been fertile soil for Italian immigrants and their descendants' contributions to history.

Immordino served as Lawrence Township's first official historian from 1981 to 1985 and has an extensive background of awards, library donations, consulting projects, and authored manuscripts documenting the role Italians have played in local and significant history. He has been interviewed by Rutgers University's Veteran's History Project and delivered conference presentations on the topic.



One of his notable contributions was the monograph on Captain James Lawrence (the namesake of his hometown) and the role Italians played.

In 1816, the community, once known as Maidenhead Township, was renamed in

honor of Captain Lawrence who is known as the "Hero of the War of 1812" and immortalized in the phrase "Don't give up the ship".

Lawrence and crew, particularly Sicilian Salvatore Catalano were to take a fishing vessel captured from Tripoli and return it to its new home.

Renamed *The Intrepid*, the vessel underwent a dangerous journey to the stranded *Philadelphia* whose crew had been taken hostage. The objective was to destroy the Philadelphia.

The crew were successful thanks in particular to Catalano who knew the language and ways of those in the Mediterranean and the port of Tripoli.

Their heroic efforts are accounted for in the U.S. Marine Hymn lines, "From the hall of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli."