

CLOSING CEREMONY  
AUGUST 30, 2015

Opening prayer.

On behalf of the Italian-American Heritage Society I would like to welcome all of you for coming here today. It is the culmination of so much hard work by so many, I hope to thank as many as I can . We have here with us today members of our society, their friends, family and guests, Italians and non-Italians. We have some special guests in our midst:

Paul DeMarco

But you will see our very special guests, wearing the name tags around their necks are some the descendants of the original stone masons, hired by Guiseppe Morietti, the sculptor of the Vulcan statue. He hired Italian immigrants to be the stone masons on the pedestal supporting the Vulcan statue, and their names are inscribed on a plaque on the pedestal, just outside the door here. We will be introducing them in a few minutes.

We are all a bit sad to see the closing of La Storia which opened in September of 2014. It is the culmination of many months of intensive effort by the executive committee. During the collection process, many of you dedicated extra time and effort to bring us items for consideration for the exhibit. Only a portion were chosen by Vulcan Park for the exhibit. We want to thank all of you who participated in that process and brought items to us to catalog. We hope we will be able to use all of them in the future for our museum. I want to thank Mary Ann Tudesco, who chaired the Collections Committee for her many "overtime" hours. I want to thank John Milazzo and Patsy Evans, who have gone above and beyond to capture on film and video our collections, our personal interviews, our opening ceremony, and recently all our exhibit as well as today's closing.

We want to recognize with our gratitude members of the executive committee, without which we would not have the exhibit at all:

Chairman Mary Jo Gagliano/ and unsung co chairman husband Charles Gagliano, who built the cabinet for our plaque, and the stand on which sits the bust of Father Canepa at our exhibit. Both were instrumental in getting this bust from St. Mark's Church to her house for extensive cleaning before arranging for it to be moved to La Storia exhibit. No small task!

Leon Chirella and his committee of one Angie Giardina!

Rose Mary Lanzi hard working financial officer

and a special thank you to Barbara Clevena who put together this fantastic and beautiful tribute book with ads and tributes, articles and lots of great information. I would like to put in a plug for that book which is available for sale on front table, and in the gift shop. It is a fitting tribute to everyone's efforts and contains a bit of our Italian history as well.

Thanks to everyone who bought ads, sold ads, honored their ancestors by adding their names to the plaque, came to the fund raising events or helped with any of this in any way.

To Mike Alexander who kept and keeps our website so beautifully.

IAHS WOULD LIKE TO THANK SIGNOR CARLO ROPPA, WHO SCULPED THE BUST OF FATHER CANEPA AND ENTRUSTED IT TO OUR SOCIETY FOR SAFEKEEPING. And to Maria Hawkins, who put us in touch with Signor Roppa.

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE, WE ALL THANK MSGR. PAUL ROHLING, PASTOR OF OUR LADY OF THE VALLEY CHURCH, FOR HIS GENEROSITY AND SUPPORT FOR SO MANY OF OUR EVENTS BY ALLOWING US TO USE HIS MAGNIFICENT FACILITY FOR OUR ELVIS SHOW, AND MASCARADE BALL FUNDRAISERS, AND, OF COURSE, OUR ST. JOSEPH'S ALTAR, AND NOW ANOTHER BIG THANK YOU FOR ENTHUSIASTICALLY AGREEING TO DISPLAY OUR PLAQUE AT OUR LADY OF THE VALLEY CHURCH FOR A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE EXHIBIT CLOSES. THANK YOU FATHER PAUL. When any of you see him, go up to him and thank him in person!

I wish to thank everyone at Vulcan park for their help and leadership in putting on a beautiful way to tell our story to the world.

Lindsay Elliott, who spent many Sundays with us during our collections.

Phil Ratliff and his UAB students for spearheading and overseeing the exhibit

Mark Akerman, his successor for his generosity in helping us put the ceremony on today

Darlene Negrotto, President and CEO

Clarence Stallworth helping with set up and facilities

AND ALL THE WORKERS HERE WHO HAVE WELCOMED US SO WARMLY EVER TIME WE ARE HERE. And many of us have been her numerous times.

Most of my "thank you's" are special thank yous. Included in special recognition are Sara Jean Brooklere hospitality for the La Storia events, and Janet Jones and husband Butch for coordinating today's reception, and to many of you who made cookies which we are all enjoying.

Thank you to all former and present board members who put in many extra hours of work in the last year.

I saved the best for last. Our "blood hound", as I have affectionately christened her, Johanna Potter who worked tirelessly in her research (as did her sister Rose Giardina,) to track down photographs, history and relatives of the original stonemasons. Many of them are here today. The results of her research are in the tribute/ad book, did I mention ? you can purchase today. **She also helped coordinate today's events, and has been beating the bushes to find a home for Father Canepa's bust.**

Right now, I would like to turn the program over to Johanna to introduce our special guests.

I hope I haven't left anyone out. There were so many to thank.

For members, a brief announcement, please vote on the by law changes, and please get your nominees to me for the new board soon. Don't forget to sign up for our golf tournament! See Anthony Graffeo!

Thank you all again for coming.