

CALABRIA!

by Kathy Winkelman



In Calabria, there are discoveries of life dating back to the prehistoric days. There is historical data back from 800 BC to 400 BC when the influences on this land by foreign civilizations began, mainly Greeks. Sybaris (now Reggio di Calabria), Kroton (now Crotona), and Locri or Magna Grecia, were colonized by the Greeks. Greece brought their civilization, community planning, politics, and written laws, not to mention the glorious grapes, olives, and figs that cover Calabria today. From one of these grapes, the Gaglioppo, comes what is still Calabria's most famous wine, Cirò, from the town of the same name. Kroton is known as the site of the first medical school in the world - 6th century B.C. It is recorded that Alcmeone dissected the eye,



ear, brain and spinal marrow there. Discovered and restored in 1972, the Bronzes of Calabria date back to 460 - 430 BC. The bronzes were found at the bottom of the Ionic Sea near Riace Marina. Now they can be seen at the National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria. (<http://www.italyheritage.com/regions/calabria/landmarks/riace-bronzes.htm>) Calabria has been known by many different names. During ancient times, this area was called Magna Grecia (Great Greece), but mostly called Italia, with residents called Italians, with this name later extending north to the peninsula while under the control of

the Romans. From 400 BC to 400 AD the area was ruled by the Roman Empire, but around 500 AD to 1190 AD the area was greatly influenced by the rules of various other dynasties: Byzantines (Eastern Roman Empire), Saracens (Arab, Turk), and Normans (Scandinavia). The following years brought the feudal system to the area by various regimes, and battles fought pushed the Calabrese to the mountain tops, causing some isolation. At the time of the Unification of Italy there was only one road that crossed this region.

The word Calabria was used by the Byzantines during the early period of the Middle Ages. Calabria, Basilicata and Apulia formed the Catepanate of Italy, and Calabria was an important commercial center. The Christian influence of the Byzantines left many monasteries that are wonderful to visit and possibly the roots of the current Greco speaking Italians. (<http://istoria.life/greko-calabria/2017/8/14/the-last-of-the-calabrian-greeks>) When you think about the scholars of ancient Greece, then the Roman Empire, followed by global influencers moving through what is now southern Italy, the significant accomplishments in science, arts, and agriculture attributed to the Italians of Calabria are not surprising.

Calabria and Sicily were known as The Two Sicilies from 1815 to 1860. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies enjoyed being the largest, most prosperous, wealthiest and populous of the Italian states. Nearly half of the world's Italians trace their roots to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. During this time the Calabrian Jewish population was estimated at around 12,000. Many Jews were prosperous merchants dominating such industries as silk trading and cloth dyeing. Money lending was also an important source of revenue for the Calabrian Jews. Our grandfather's trade was a shoemaker and his brothers were in the fabric and clothing business. The last dynasty to rule Sicily and almost half of the Italian peninsula as a sovereign kingdom was the Bourbons of the royal houses of France and Spain. The Bourbons had influence over the Two Sicilies resulting in many native Italians born with fair hair and blue eyes. The Normans built many castles in Calabria, and though some had been altered by the Spanish or other conquerors, for the most part they can

be attributed to the Normans and make for an interesting visit (<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g187774-Activities-c47-t6-Calabria.html>)

During the later rule of the Bourbons, Calabrians became increasingly disgruntled and staged several insurrections, for which there were executions or life imprisonments. They began to band together to form secret societies with laws enforced by brigands and bandits which set the beginnings of organized crime. In 1860, in a movement called “Il Risorgimento,” or the Revival, Garibaldi conquered Sicily and then the rest of southern Italy with the goal of unifying Italy under the Sardinian House of Savoy (from Alpine Region of France and Italy area). In 1861, the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed under King Vittorio Emanuele II. The feudal system was still largely practiced in the south, making it difficult for farmers to have their own land. Life for southern Italians was lots of hard work and little to show for it. Leaving their homeland and starting somewhere else seemed to be the only choice for many southern Italians.



There are five provinces in Calabria: Cosenza, Reggio di Calabria, Catanzaro, Crotona and Vibo Valentia. Francesco Giordano, our mother's father, was born in 1899 in Lago, Cosenza, Calabria. He was conscripted into the Italian Army on May 4, 1917. Grandpa was drafted as a 17-year-old. Italy was losing the war (WWI), and as a last-ditch effort, they called up the “Ragazzi del 99”, the boys born in 1899. For most of the war, he was in the 10th Rifle Regiment, 7th Company, which was one of the *Bersagliere*, an elite corps of the Italian army. The Boys of 99 were credited with turning the war around at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, the battle ground just north of Venice. As a group, they received a Medal of Valor. Grandpa also received a War Merit cross in 1968 as a commemoration of those who were in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto. Around 1892, a mass emigration from Italy began. By 1924, five million Italians had left the country, reducing its population by a third. About 80% of these emigrants were from the *Mezzogiorno*, the southern provinces. That is when our grandfather immigrated to the United States. Many Italians went to the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, and elsewhere in Europe. Around 1960, the economic conditions of the south could not match those of northern Italy, and so another wave of Italians left in search of work elsewhere in the middle 20th century. In the 1960s, the Italian economy improved in the south primarily with help from funds of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*.

(Fund for the South, Cash for the Land of the Midday Sun). It was a public effort by the government to stimulate economic growth and development in Southern Italy to construct roads, bridges, hydroelectric and irrigation projects, and to provide credit subsidies and tax advantages to promote investments. It focused mostly on rural areas and assisted Southern Italy to enter the modern world, although there is evidence that some of the funds were squandered due to poor financial management by the local southern government. At present, Calabria and all of Italy struggle with mass immigration from the south affecting the economy, as immigrants arrive daily. Although Calabria still struggles for economic and social respect this unique region is becoming recognized with increases in exports and in tourism. One of the most successful products produced in Calabria is Bergamotto Citrus which is mostly limited to the Ionian Sea coastal areas of the province of Reggio di Calabria, to such an extent that it is a symbol of the entire city. Most of the bergamot comes from a short stretch of land where the



temperature is favorable (<http://www.madeinsouthitalytoday.com/bergamotto-di-reggio-calabria.php>) With the increased popularity of essential oils around the world, this product is in demand and not easily produced. The amount produced in Calabria is shrinking from the 18th century production levels. The oil is used in perfumes, medicines, and desserts. Of Italy's total olive oil production, 77% comes from Calabria and Apulia. The beaches of Calabria are a draw for the locals and beginning to draw foreigners to vacation in the seaside villages more and more. (<http://www.panoramitalia.com/en/travel/article/top-10-beaches-calabria/2624/>)

For beach tourism, the cities most visited are Amantea, Reggio Calabria, Catanzaro, Cosenza, Cotone, Vibo Valentia, Tropea, and Capo Vaticano. There are national parks in Calabria, and Greek ruins (Sibari). Not to mention the proximity to Sicily for a continued visit. *Buon Viaggio!!* <http://www.travelviainaly.com/regions-of-italy/most-beautiful-places-to-visit-in-calabria/>



CALABRIA!

Regium Waterfront Project



Arancia di Villa San Giuseppe



Bergamotto di Reggio



Tropea



Pizzo Chiesa Piedgrotta



Pentedattilo



CALABRIA!

Scilla Castle



Suino Nero Calabrese



Asparago Selvatico



Porto di Gioia Tauro



Chiesa Santa Maria Dellisola



Licorice!

