

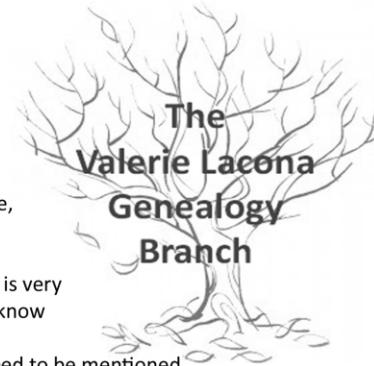
## Italian Naming Traditions

By Kathy Foggia

There has been a custom in Italy that determines how children are named:

- The first male is named after his paternal grandfather.
- The second male is named after his maternal grandfather.
- The first female is named after her maternal grandmother.
- The following children could be named after a favorite aunt or uncle, the parents, or a deceased relative.

You will probably see examples of this in your family and, although this custom is very popular, don't assume it to be the rule in finding your ancestor's name. If you know your grandfather, Giuseppe, was the oldest son, don't assume that his paternal grandfather was named Giuseppe. There are exceptions to this custom that need to be mentioned.



A man has a firstborn son and names him Antonio after his paternal grandfather, then he has several other sons. At age 7 Antonio dies so, if the man has another son, he would name that son Antonio after his paternal grandfather again. Another exception might be that your ancestor didn't know who his grandparents were to name his children after. There were many orphans and illegitimate children born in 19th and early 20th century Italy. If your ancestor was estranged from his family, they might not follow the naming tradition, or they just might not be traditional and follow the custom! It sure does make for difficult genealogical research at times.

Because of the pervasiveness of the custom, you will find many people sharing the same name. For an example: Cataldo Leo marries a woman named Rosa and they have three sons - Domenico, Pietro, and Donato. Each of these sons marries and has his own children. As per the custom, they will all name their first son Cataldo after their father, and they will all name their first daughter Rosa after their mother. We have three Cataldo Leo's all born in the same town, within the same generation, possibly even born in the same year. The same situation exists for Rosa Leo. So now you come along looking for the birth record for your ancestor Cataldo Leo, and you must be diligent to get the right ancestor. It might be a birth date that tells you, or a notation on the birth record of who they married that is the clue to solve the dilemma.

If you want to learn more about your Italian family tree, please sign up for our October 20th workshop at the Italian-American Cultural Center. Email [foggia@iaccopia.org](mailto:foggia@iaccopia.org) for more information or stop by and see me at the Festival in the Cultural Hall.

## We Are The Chosen

*by Della M. Cummings Wright (Rewritten by her granddaughter Dell Jo Ann McGinnis Johnson)*

In each family there is one who seems called to find the ancestors. To put flesh on their bones and make them live again. To tell the family story and to feel that somehow they know and approve. Doing genealogy is not a cold gathering of facts but, instead, breathing life into all who have gone before us. We are the storytellers of the tribe. All tribes have one. We have been called, as it were, by our genes. Those who have gone before us cry out to us: Tell our story. So, we do. In finding them, we somehow find ourselves.

It goes beyond just documenting facts. It goes to who I am, and why I do the things I do. It goes to pride in what our ancestors were able to accomplish. How they contributed to what we are today. It goes to respecting their hardships and losses, their never giving in or giving up, their resoluteness to go on and build a life for their family. It goes to deep pride that the fathers fought and some died to make and keep us a nation. It goes to a deep and immense understanding that they were doing it for us. With love and caring, we scribe each fact of their existence, because we are they and they are the sum of who we are.

So, I tell the story of my family. It is up to that one called in the next generation to answer the call and take my place in the long line of family storytellers. That is why I do my family genealogy, and that is what calls those young and old to step up and restore the memory or greet those who we had never known before.