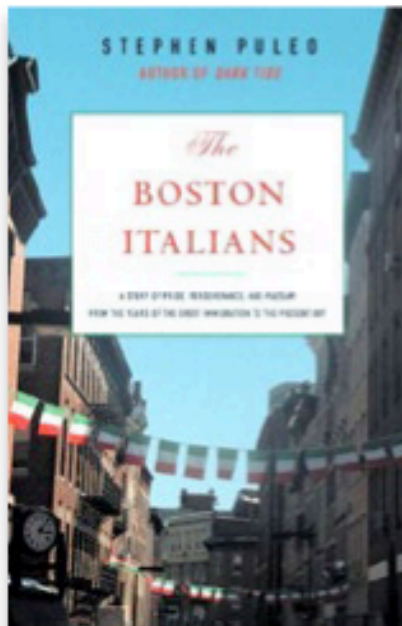




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## Book Corner



### The Boston Italians

by Stephen Puleo

It's a pleasure to recommend this intensely researched book on the history of Italians in Boston, Massachusetts. Though the book focuses on Boston, the trends, prejudices, failures and accomplishments represent the Italian experience in all our great cities and indeed in some smaller towns as well. No matter how knowledgeable you are regarding Italian American history, I guarantee you will learn something from this book.

The details in the form of quotations, excerpts from letters and personal interviews constitute an impressive literary accomplishment.

Mr. Puleo's family has its American roots in Boston, thus his interest. Personal family experiences are sprinkled in various chapters rendering the book mildly autobiographical. Central to the narrative is the famous Italian American newspaper, La Gazzetta, now published in English as Post Gazette and still operated by the original

Donnaruma family descendants. They have been a force in politics by serving as the voice of the Italian immigrant community.

Through Mr. Puleo's telling, we learn details of the Italian American experience about which we all have heard something: the exodus from Italy after the unification, the reluctance of Italians to become citizens during the early immigration period, involvement in anarchism, details of Sacco and Vanzetti, fascism, the Red Scare, lynching of Italians and, of course, crime syndicates. We also learn details about political profiling and prejudice (I was shocked to read President Nixon's comments on Italian Americans). The author relates a wealth of information about Italians in WWI, internment and the labelling of Italians as Enemy Aliens during WWII (those who had not yet applied for citizenship).

Mr. Puleo enters into the modern era with stories of illustrious Italian Americans in many fields of endeavor. The author interestingly delves into the love/hate relationship Italian Americans have with the mafia. While we all dislike that our ethnicity is continually stereotyped as criminal, who among us has not enjoyed The Godfather movies and De Niro's many gangster rolls. It's definitely a contradiction. You will be surprised as I was that Robert De Niro was offered Honorary Italian Citizenship. The U.S. National Sons of Italy protested it on the grounds that DeNiro "profited from negative stereotypes of Italians for years," making him an Italian American "Uncle Tom." Ultimately, DeNiro declined the offer.

Mr. Puleo's talented, experienced writing ability presents all this information and more in very readable and enjoyable text. The Boston Italians is beautifully written, thoroughly researched (there are 18 pages of bibliography!), educational and entertaining. Enjoy!