

GEOGRAPHY QUICK GUIDE

Find Your Italian Town of Origin

Knowing where your ancestor was born or married is important because the majority of Italian records were created at the town or parish level. Therefore, if you don't know your ancestor's town of birth, it's very difficult to find his birth record. The exception to this rule is military records, which are kept by province and military district. Years of conscription vary by region but generally are available for those born past 1855.

Example: if you know that a male ancestor came from the province of Reggio Calabria, you could request a search of the military conscription records (*liste di leva*) held at the Archivio di Stato di Reggio Calabria (Provincial/State Archive of Reggio Calabria). These records provide the ancestor's date of birth, place of birth, and parent's names, amongst other information specific to his military service.



REGIONS OF ITALY	
REGION	CAPITAL
Abruzzo	L'Aquila
Aosta Valley	Aosta
Apulia	Bari
Basilicata	Potenza
Calabria	Catanzaro
Campania	Naples
Emilia-Romagna	Bologna
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	Trieste
Lazio	Rome
Liguria	Genoa
Lombardy	Milan
Marche	Ancona
Molise	Campobasso
Piedmont	Turin
Sardinia	Cagliari
Sicily	Palermo
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	Trento
Tuscany	Florence
Umbria	Perugia
Veneto	Venice

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS	
DIVISION	NOTES
<i>comune/città</i>	Town or city. In Italy, the majority of records were created in this jurisdiction, whether civil or ecclesiastical.
<i>frazione or quartiere</i>	Hamlets or neighborhoods. These are sometimes designated at <i>località distaccata</i> (local district).
<i>contrada</i>	Rural township. Usually in the countryside surrounding a town; similar to a US township.
<i>provincia</i>	Province. The equivalent of a US county. As of September 2014, there are 110 provinces in Italy.
<i>capaluogo</i>	Capital city of a province. Typically has same name as the province.
<i>regione</i>	Region. Italy currently has 20 regions, five of which are more autonomous and have different legal statutes: Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, Aosta Valley and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.
<i>parrocchia</i>	Parish. Small towns may have only one parish and large cities may have dozens.
<i>diocese or diocesi</i>	Diocese. A diocese is a group of parishes contained within an ecclesiastical district.

RECORD OFFICES	
<i>anagrafe</i>	registry office
<i>archivi di stato</i>	state/provincial archives
<i>archivio diocesano, archivio storico diocesano</i>	diocesan archives
<i>municipio</i>	town hall
<i>tribunale</i>	district court (similar to a county clerk's office)
<i>ufficio dello stato civile</i>	civil records office

Map of Italian Regions



LANGUAGE QUICK GUIDE

NUMBERS		
	CARDINAL (one, two ...)	ORDINAL* (first, second ...)
0	zero	
1	uno	primo(a)
2	due	secondo(a)
3	tre	terzo(a)
4	quattro	quarto(a)
5	cinque	quinto(a)
6	sei	sesto(a)
7	sette	settimo(a)
8	otto	ottavo(a)
9	nove	nono(a)
10	dieci	decimo(a)
11	undici	undicesimo(a)
12	dodici	dodicesimo(a)
13	tredici	tredicesimo(a)
14	quattordici	quattordicesimo(a)
15	quindici	quindicesimo(a)
16	sedici	sedicesimo(a)
17	diciassette	diciassettesimo(a)
18	diciotto	diciottesimo(a)
19	diciannove	diciannovesimo(a)
20	venti	ventesimo(a)
21	ventuno	ventunesimo(a)
22	ventidue	ventiduesimo(a)
23	ventitre	ventitreesimo(a)
24	ventiquattro	ventiquattresimo(a)
25	venticinque	venticinqesimo(a)
26	ventisei	ventiseiesimo(a)
27	ventisette	ventisettesimo(a)
28	ventisette	ventottesimo(a)
29	ventinove	ventinovesimo(a)
30	trenta	trentesimo(a)
31	trentuno	trentunesimo(a)
40	quaranta	quarantesimo(a)
50	cinquanta	cinquantesimo(a)
60	sessanta	sessantesimo(a)
70	settanta	settantesimo(a)
80	ottanta	ottantesimo(a)
90	novanta	novantesimo(a)
100	cento	centesimo(a)

DAYS OF THE WEEK*	
domenica	Sunday
lunedì	Monday
martedì	Tuesday
mercoledì	Wednesday
giovedì	Thursday
venerdì	Friday
sabato	Saturday

MONTHS*	
gennaio	January
febbraio	February
marzo	March
aprile	April
maggio	May
giugno	June
luglio	July
agosto	August
settembre	September
ottobre	October
novembre	November
dicembre	December

* Names of months and days of the week aren't capitalized in Italian.



Writing to Italian Archives

If you can't find records online or on microfilm, you'll need to request them from the Italian archive or parish with jurisdiction over your ancestor's records. Write in Italian, referring to the letter-writing guide at www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Italy_Letter_Writing_Guide. Don't send money for postage unless it's requested. Include your email address in your letter, and the recipient will let you know if you must send postage before the request can be filled.

LANGUAGE QUICK GUIDE

VITAL EVENTS

<i>battesimo</i>	baptism/ christening
<i>matrimonio</i>	marriage
<i>morte</i>	death
<i>nascita</i>	birth
<i>seppellimento, sepulture</i>	burial

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

<i>bisnonna</i>	great-grandmother
<i>bisnonno</i>	great-grandfather
<i>cugino</i>	cousin
<i>figlia</i>	daughter
<i>figliastro(a)</i>	stepchild
<i>figlio</i>	son
<i>figlioccio(a)</i>	godchild
<i>fratello</i>	brother
<i>genitori</i>	parents
<i>madre</i>	mother
<i>madrina</i>	godmother
<i>matrigna</i>	stepmother
<i>marito</i>	husband
<i>moglie</i>	wife
<i>neonato, neonata, infante, bambino</i>	child
<i>nipotina, nipote</i>	granddaughter
<i>nipotino, nipote</i>	grandson
<i>nonna</i>	grandmother
<i>nonni</i>	grandparents
<i>nonno</i>	grandfather
<i>padre</i>	father
<i>padrini</i>	godparents
<i>padrino</i>	godfather
<i>patrigno</i>	stepfather
<i>sorella</i>	sister
<i>sposa</i>	bride
<i>sposo</i>	bridegroom
<i>vedovo(a)</i>	widower, widow
<i>zia</i>	aunt
<i>zio</i>	uncle



7 Tips for Unpuzzling Italian Names

If you don't know the names of your immigrant ancestor's parents, Italian naming customs can provide clues to their given names. Many (but not all) Italian families followed this naming pattern:

- 1 The first son is named for the paternal grandfather.
- 2 The second son is named for the maternal grandfather.
- 3 The first daughter is named for the paternal grandmother.
- 4 The second daughter is named for the maternal grandmother.

5 Subsequent children may be named for aunts, uncles, a patron saint or the parents.

6 Italian families honored their forebears by naming their children after them. If a child died, the next child of the same gender receives the same name.

7 In certain cases, this tradition doesn't hold, such as families who lost many children. After the third child named Francesco passed away, a family might have given up trying to name a child after his maternal grandfather. Superstition sometimes played a part in these decisions.

MORE HELPFUL TERMS

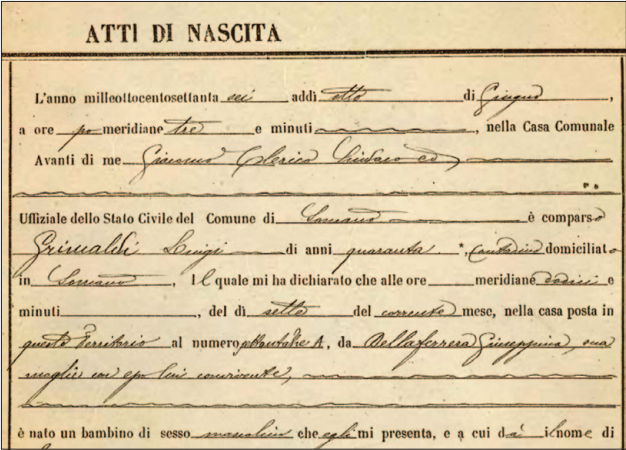

<i>anno</i>	year
<i>certificato di stato di famiglia</i>	certificate of family status
<i>cimitero</i>	cemetery
<i>cognome</i>	surname
<i>giorno</i>	day
<i>indice</i>	index
<i>mese</i>	month
<i>nome</i>	name
<i>nome da ragazza</i>	maiden name
<i>occupazione</i>	occupation
<i>parrocchia</i>	parish
<i>passaporto</i>	passport
<i>prenome</i>	given name/first name
<i>stato di famiglia storico</i>	historical state of the family certificate

HISTORICAL TIMELINE





1543 -1563	Council of Trent requires priests and bishops to maintain baptism, marriage and death/burial records. Most are kept in Latin.	1846	The new Pope, Pius IX, supports unification.
1559	Spain rules most of what's now Italy until 1713. Many records are kept in Spanish.	1848 -1849	Austria defeats the Kingdom of Sardinia in the First Italian War of Independence; revolts occur throughout Italy.
1713	Treaty of Utrecht awards much of Italy to Austria (Spain regains Naples and Sicily in 1738). Many records are kept in German.	1861	Most of the states of the Italian Peninsula are united under King Victor Emmanuel II of the Savoy dynasty, crowned King of Italy.
1768	French oust the Genoese from the island of Corsica (civil registration begins there about 1800, with records in Italian or French).	1866	Region of Venezia becomes part of Italy with Prussia's win in the Austro-Prussian War. Law then mandates civil registration.
1797	Napoleon Bonaparte of France signs the Treaty of Campo Formio with Austria, gaining its Italian territories.	1871	After the Franco-Prussian War ousts France from Rome, Rome becomes the capital and <i>Risorgimento</i> (unification) is complete.
1806	Napoleon's French Empire annexes much of what's now Italy and implements civil registration in most areas.	1908	An earthquake centered on the strait of Messina kills up to 200,000 people in Sicily and southern Italy.
1808	Kingdom of Naples, consisting of areas of mainland Italy south of Rome, begins civil registration. Civil registration records created from 1806 to 1815 are now called the <i>Stato Civile Napoleonico</i> .	1919	Cities of Trentino and Trieste, once part of Austria-Hungary, become part of Italy following World War I.
1815	After Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna returns Italy to its former rulers.	1922	Benito Mussolini is named prime minister of Italy.
1816	Civil registration is discontinued in most areas of northern Italy. Southern Italy except for Sicily maintains civil registration. Records from this era through 1865 are now called the <i>Stato Civile Restaurazione</i> or <i>Stato Civile Borbonico</i> .	1940	Italy invades Greece from already-occupied Albania, entering World War II.
1820	Sicily begins civil registration.	1945	By war's end, about 492,000 Italians had died and fighting had led to severe record losses in some areas. The area around Cassino, in the province of Frosinone, was hit particularly hard. Many civil records were later "reconstructed" from other copies or by individuals re-recording births and marriages at town halls.
1821	Annibale Santorre De Rossi di Pomarolo leads a revolt in Piedmont, in an attempt to remove the Austrians and unify the Italian territories.	1946	Italians vote to establish a republican constitution.
1830 -1831	A series of uprisings along the Italian Peninsula call for unification; Austrians crush the resistance.	1970	Divorce becomes legal in Italy.

RECORDS QUICK GUIDE


CIVIL RECORDS			
RECORD TYPE	ITALIAN NAME	DESCRIPTION	CONTENTS
Act of birth	Atto di Nati/Nascita	Civil law required that a child's birth be reported to the town hall within three days. The child's father or the midwife usually presented the child and the civil official verified its gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ date, place and time of birth ■ full name of the child, which may include middle names not previously known ■ date, place and time of presentation and who presented the child ■ names of parents (and sometimes the given names of paternal grandfathers) ■ if anyone was deceased, it will be noted before the name of the deceased party ■ age, occupation and residence of parents ■ date, town and sometimes the parish of baptism (for pre-1865) birth records ■ literacy of declarants and witnesses (who might be family members)
 <p>Italian civil birth records typically give the date and place of birth, and name the child, parents, and sometimes paternal grandfathers.</p>			
Marriage banns	Atti di Pubblicazioni/Notificazioni	Marriage banns were notifications of an impending marriage and are not proof that a couple actually wed. The banns were posted on the door of the town hall on two consecutive Sundays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ may or may not include birth or baptism dates of the couple ■ age of bride and groom
Marriage promise	Atto di Sollene Promessa di Celebrare il Matrimonio	These records are found in most areas of Italy prior to 1865 and are usually two to four pages. The document is a promise to marry, not the actual marriage document. The couple filed their marriage banns and marriage promise with the local government, then went to the parish to be married.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ date, time and place of ecclesiastical marriage ■ extracted birth or baptismal records of the bride and groom ■ extracted death records of any deceased parents. If the paternal grandfather of either the bride or groom was deceased, the couple was required to attach an extract of the death record ■ extracted copy marriage banns ■ extract of the marriage promise ■ certificate of poverty, included if a couple were so poor they couldn't pay the fees associated with filing the marriage documents ■ permissions of any parents not present or who were deceased, often included whether or not the bride and groom were of legal age
			
Acts of marriage	Atto di Matrimonio	Civil marriage records are usually found after 1865, excepting a few areas that never instituted marriage promises and instead used acts of marriage continuously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ name, surname, place and date of birth, and current residence of spouses ■ name, surname, place and date of birth, and current residence of witnesses ■ place of marriage celebration ■ statement by registrar the couple is married by law

RECORDS QUICK GUIDE

CIVIL RECORDS			
RECORD TYPE	ITALIAN NAME	DESCRIPTION	CONTENTS
Acts of death	<i>Atto di Morti/Morte</i>	Records a person's death within civil registers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date, time and place the death was reported names, ages, occupations and places of residence for the declarants name, age, occupation and place of residence for the deceased name of the deceased's spouse and whether living names of the deceased's parents, if they were living and where they resided date, place and time of death literacy of declarants and witnesses, all of whom might be family members or friends (Note: It's important to note the literacy of declarants and witnesses to understand why errors occurred within the records. If the declarant and witnesses weren't literate, they couldn't verify that the information was recorded correctly. Anyone can make an error, even officials.)
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Civil death records in Italy also may give details on witnesses.</p> </div>			
Citizenship records	<i>Cittadinanza</i>	Citizenship records were kept as a means of tracking the internal (within the country) permanent migration of an Italian citizen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> name of emigrant/immigrant town they are going to or coming from given name of father and if he was living names of any siblings emigrating with him

CHURCH RECORDS			
RECORD TYPE	ITALIAN NAME	DESCRIPTION	CONTENTS
Baptismal records	<i>Battesimi</i>	These record the baptism of a child and usually contain only a few pieces of useful information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> given name of child being baptized (the surname is inferred and assumed to be the same as the father's unless stated otherwise) date of baptism occasionally, birth date parents' names (mother's surname is often omitted and occasionally her whole name) godparents' names
<div style="text-align: center;">  </div>			
Confirmation records	<i>Cresima/Confirmazione</i>	Confirmations were performed for 8- to 12-year-olds once a year, when the bishop visited the parish on his annual tour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date of confirmation name of child age of child father's name
Ecclesiastical death/burial records	<i>Sepultures</i>	These document death and sometimes burial. Parish death records read more like burial records prior to the 18th century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date of death name of the deceased sacraments given name of cemetery (not included in small towns with only one cemetery)
State of the souls (parish censuses)	<i>Status Animarum/ Stato delle Anime</i>	These censuses were taken for taxation purposes, and used to track parish members' vital statistics and sacraments. Useful in areas of Italy that didn't have civil registration for much of the 19th century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names type of property location of property specifics of taxation

RECORDS QUICK GUIDE

MILITARY RECORDS			
RECORD TYPE	ITALIAN NAME	DESCRIPTION	CONTENTS
Conscription records 	<i>Liste di Leva</i>	Conscription records are a valuable resource for those researching their Italian ancestors because they were kept by military district, not by town. Use these to find a soldier's town of origin within his conscription record.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ draftee's name ■ birth date and place (town and province, sometimes also the hamlet) ■ parents' names ■ occupation ■ whether soldier was literate ■ notations of eligibility and whether the soldier appeared as instructed (If the ancestor emigrated, it often will be noted on his conscription record.) ■ physical description including hair color, skin coloration, eye color, height and weight designated in metric measurements, and any scars or otherwise identifying marks (i.e., major dental problems) ■ notations on what military regiment soldier was assigned to, whether he had emigrated, whether any siblings were entering the service with him, etc.
Service records	<i>Ruoli Matricolari/Registri dei Foglio Matricolari</i>	A soldier's military service was documented on these records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ any campaigns he participated in ■ honors or medals earned ■ wounds inflicted during time of service ■ desertions
Discharge papers	<i>Foglio di Congedo Illimitato</i>	Records are usually found in the papers of Italian-American families. Immigrants brought these documents with them as proof that they'd already served their time in the Italian army.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ name of soldier ■ service number ■ year and place of birth ■ regiment and location in which he served ■ dates of discharge ■ notations of any commendations/medals received ■ notations regarding any permanent injuries sustained

RESOURCES

- **Ancestry.com: Italian Genealogy Terms—Occupations**
<c.ancestry.com/Affiliate/Knowledgebase/Guides/Ancestrylibrary/Italian_Occupations.pdf>
- **Antenati Gli Archivi per la Ricerca Anagrafica** (Italian State Archives)
<www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it>
- **Archivio di Stato di Milano (State Archives of Milan)** <www.archiviodistatomilano.beniculturali.it>
- **Corriere Della Serra/Dizionari (Dictionary)** <dizionari.corriere.it>
- **The Family Tree Italian Genealogy Guide** by Melanie D. Holtz (Family Tree Books)
- **FamilySearch: Basic Italian Research**
<www.familysearch.org/learningcenter/lesson/basic-italian-research/246>
- **FamilySearch: Italian Genealogical Word List**
<www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Italian_Birth_Document_Translation>
- **FamilySearch: Italian Script Tutorial**
<www.familysearch.org/learningcenter/lesson/italian-script-tutorial/93>
- **Finding Our Italian Roots**
<italiangenealogyroots.blogspot.com>
- **Italian Genealogy Forums**
<www.genteditmaregenealogy.com>
- **Italian Genealogical Group**
<www.italiengen.org>
- **ItalianGenealogy.com**
<www.italiangenealogy.com>
- **Italian Genealogy Online**
<geocities.ws/paulanigro/italian-genealogy-online>
- **Italian Genealogical Society of America**
<italianroots.org>
- **Italian Municipalities**
<comuni-italiani.it>
- **Italian Parishes Search Engine**
<www.parrocchie.it>
- **Italian Genealogical Records Online**
<www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it>
- **LinkedIn Italian Genealogy Groups**
<www.linkedin.com/groups/Italian-Genealogy-2968503>
- **Transcribed Vital Records of Italian Towns**
<www.sersale.org/comunes.htm>
- **Termini Imerese Database** (transcribed Italian indexes)
<www.termini-imerese.org>