

History

They Made a New Life here

By MARGARET KOCH
Sentinel Staff Writer

The eight patriarchs arrived first. Some as grown men with wives and families. Some as young seamen, unmarried.

They came from Riva Trigoso, a small, beautiful village on the Ligurian coast of Italy which dates back to the 10th Century.

"They came from the proud and beautiful tradition of Genovese seagoing families," explains Riccardo Gaudino. Gaudino, at UCSC, was instrumental in supervising the research done this past year on the eight Italian fishing families that came to Santa Cruz and pioneered the fishing industry on the municipal wharf.

The first of the eight families to arrive from Riva Trigoso was that of Domenico Canepa; they settled in Capitola.

The others gradually settled in Santa Cruz on "La Baranca," the hill bounded by Bay Street, Lighthouse Avenue, Laguna, Liberty, Gharky and Santa Cruz Streets.

They called themselves "i baranchieri" — meaning residents of the Baranca area.

They worked hard, long, dangerous hours, sometimes in storm and cold. Their women worked hard too. Boccaccia (his nickname) Loero married Celestrina Stagnaro and when he died she was left with six children to support. Celestrina — she was called "Lala" (aunt) by her niece, Mary Carniglia, worked in the fields during the day and mended the fishermen's nets at night, in

order to get by.

Boccaccia was nicknamed that because he liked to talk, Mary said. They were, for the most part, hardy folk. Celestrina died at age 92 in 1958. Boccaccia, whose baptismal name was Giovanni Batista Loero, had first gone to sea as a boy, age 14.

Cottardo "Trub" Ghio married Clara Loero and they worked as a team. He fished and she mended his nets. His nickname of "Trub" came from the word "trouble." Both Trub and his wife were born in Riva Trigoso and came to California as young children with their families.

Trub and Clara had eight children, three of whom survived to adulthood: Vittoria Ghio Torchio, Johnnie Ghio and Stella Ghio Antonette.

A typical Santa Cruz expression among members of the fishing colony was: "Se ti te fa L'America, a fago anche me!" If you can make it in America, so can I!

These families were not the poor, downtrodden of Italy. They were making a living in Riva Trigoso — some even a very good living. Then what brought them to America?

Many had relatives who had come here and who painted vivid pictures of prosperity and freedom — political freedom, education, the unstructured society in which they could rise if they wished. And so they came, according to Gaudino.

Patriarch of the Carniglia family was Giovanni Battista Carniglia, called "Potatu" meaning potato. He was a merchant in Riva Trigoso, and

he married Lorensina Stagnaro. Potatu's son, Marco, became known as "Il Rey di Monterey," the King of Monterey Bay, by the Sicilian fishermen. Marco discovered a virgin fishery about 40 miles South on the Big Sur coast. Marco named his boat The Five Brothers, for his five sons: John, August (Jocko), Marco and the twins, Victor and Virgil.

Baciun Cecchini bought a renovated life boat in Eureka for \$300 and was paid \$7 every Sunday for using his boat for advertising the Ideal Fish Restaurant. When asked about it he commented: "Era moneta" —

"it was money." In the average fisherman's kly earnings added up to \$7.

Torello Cecchini, married Marianna Carniglia was the patriarch of the Cini family. They had seven children, one of whom was Baciun. Today Baciun carves del sailing ships — it is becoming an art.

Three generations of the Bassano family were fishermen — in fact a Bassano still fishing today, according Riccardo Gaudino.

Giovanni Bregante was perhaps the first of the colony to become an American citizen — in 1889, in Santa Cruz. Gianni

married Maria Stagnaro, a sister of Celestina. Vittoria and Cottardo Stagnaro. The Bregantes were the parents of Mary Carniglia who says today: "My mother lived in the fishing colony (La Baranca) for more than 35 years and never set foot on Pacific Avenue."

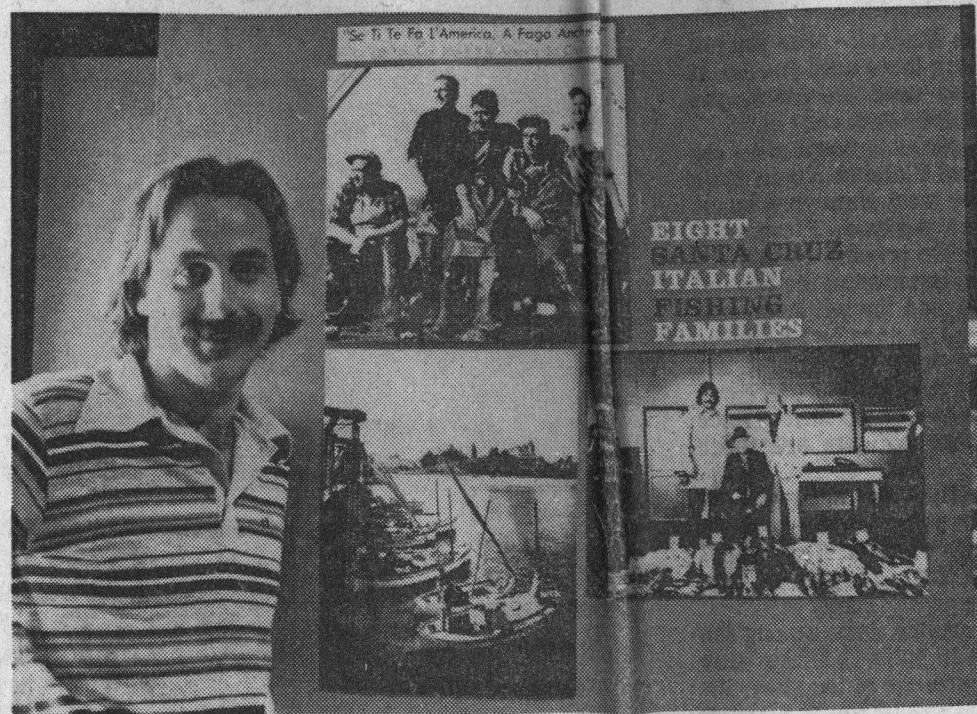
Dante Canepa — "the sailor" — and another patriarch, enlisted in the Italian Navy as a young boy and specialized in celestial navigation. He had three sisters and a brother living in California when he decided to stay here. He "jumped ship" about 1903 in a California port. Old family stories are fascinating.



Riva Trigoso - La spiaggia

Above, picturesque village of Riva Trigoso.

Left: Riccardo Gaudino spearheaded project of researching families



Tradition, History

There is a long tradition of brave Genovese fishermen that goes back to Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus), and Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) who was Henry Hudson's navigator.

Another famous, more recent person of Genovese descent: Amadeo Giannini who founded the Bank of Italy, now the Bank of America.

Oldest item in the eight-family local exhibit at Santa Cruz City Museum, 1305 East Cliff Drive, is the cover page of Domenico Canepa's sea log issued to him on February 11, 1860.

In sailor suit, Dante



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left, on railroad wharf,
1913: Giovanni
Bregante, Augustino
Oliveieri, Ernesto
Canepa, Lina Righetti
Canepa, Margarita
Canepa

Good friends on,
wharf, 1942: Lorenzo
Zolezzi, 'Babe'
Stagnaro, Joe Loero



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And Founded an Industry

The eight Italian families from Riva Trigoso who came to Santa Cruz from the 1870s on, and who founded the local fishing colony, are the subject of a pictorial display at Santa Cruz City Museum, 1305 East Cliff Drive. They include the Dante Canepa, Domenico Canepa, Bassano, Cecchini, Loero, Carniglia, Ghio and Bregante families. In the early days there were no radios on their fishing boats. The men yelled to each other from boat to boat. In winter time, the fishermen of Monterey Bay would go

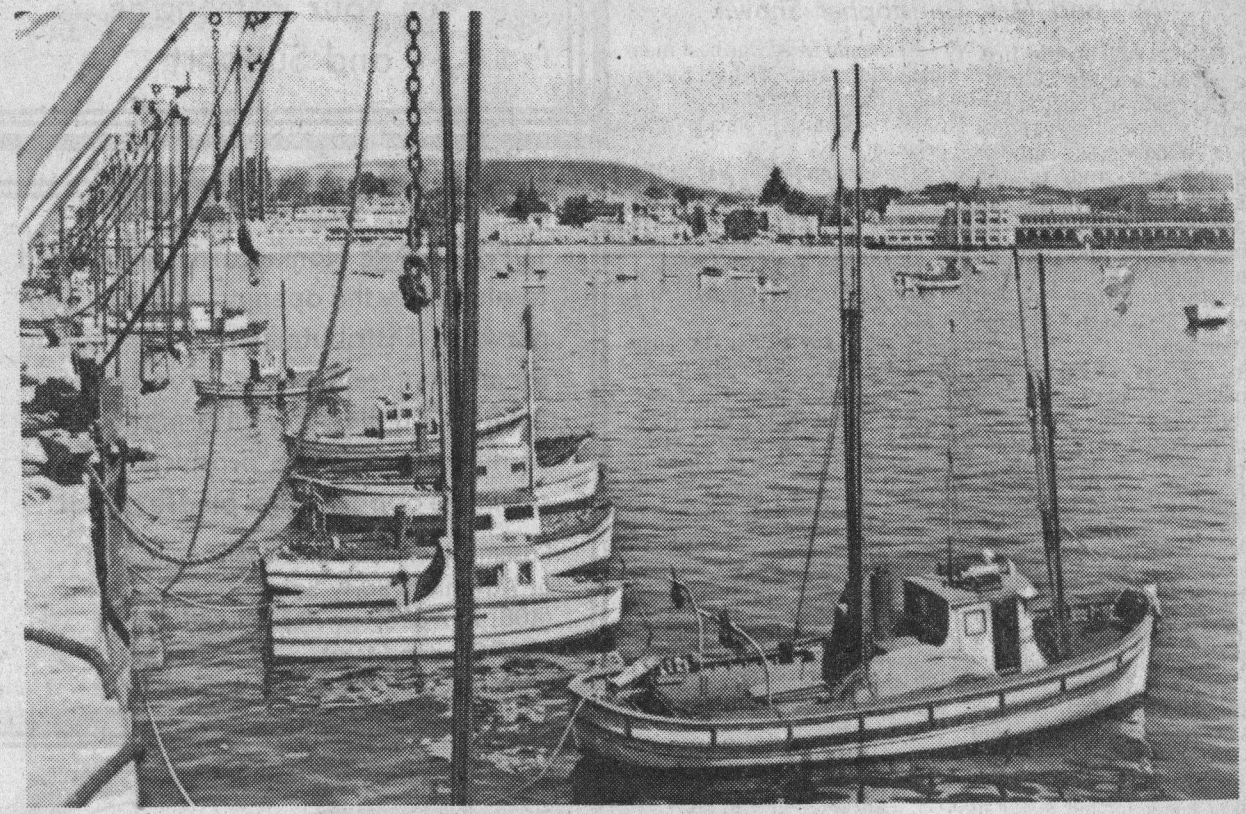
North to San Francisco and Tomales Bay waters to catch the herring. They used gill, lampara and purse-seine nets, all netting principles which were developed over the centuries in the Mediterranean. Lampara refers to "lamp" — lights were used to attract the fish, a practice now illegal. The purse-seine net was laid out in such a way as to be drawn up into a "purse" or pocket in which the fish were trapped. Davits were the crane-like arrangements attached to the edges of the Municipal Wharf,

which winched the fishing boats up out of the water for repairs or during bad storms. Santa Cruz has no natural protected harbor. In the 1950s when the wharf was enlarged and modernized, the davits were all removed. The patriarchs, heads of families, who first arrived from Italy, ruled every phase of their families' lives. They worked long hours at hard tasks, often, at first, getting only two cents a pound for their catches. Patriarchs even arranged marriages for their daughters, upon occasion, through their

concern for the welfare of the family, the continuing line. The second generation became more easily bilingual, speaking Italian at home and English at school and in the world outside La Baranca. However, most of them remained in the fishing industry as hard-working fishermen. The third generation of the eight families has widely diverse interests and few speak "Rivana," the Genovese dialect of Riva Trigoso, according to Riccardo Gaudino who supervised all research and collected family photographs.



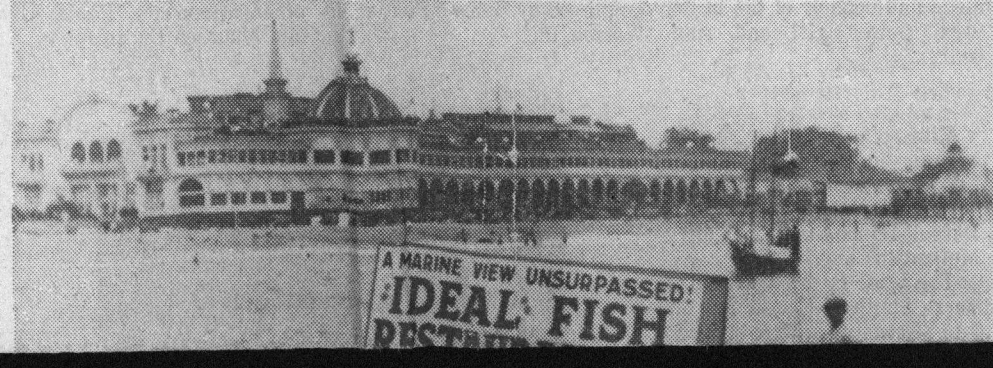
Johnny Ghio; unloads catch of albacore in 1938. He recalls going to work at 3, after school, working until 1 a.m.



Davits on wharf hung empty when the fleet was in the water



All the gang, 1925, from left: Edith Canepa, Ruby McCall, Maria Canepa, Margarita Canepa, Rosa Oliveiri, unknown, Ida Lyon



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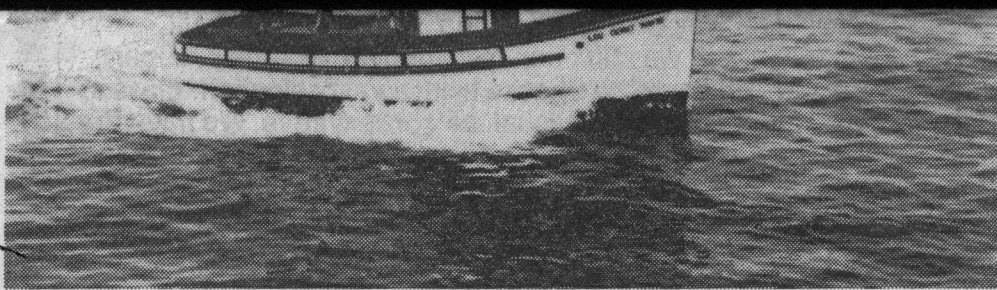
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The Bassano boat, named the Lou Denny Wayne; three generations of Bassanos were (are) local fishermen



One way to make a little extra cash — using the family boat for advertising purposes: Cecchini boat, 1937



Three brothers: Marco, Jocko and John Carniglia, on wharf

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