

What Columbus Started

by Bill Dal Cerro

It has been more than 500 years since **Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus)** traveled to the Americas. Considering that he was, in a way, the 'first' Italian immigrant to these shores, what kind of an influence have his Italian brothers and sisters had on the US ever since? Let's consider a typical 'American' day. Brrring! Your alarm clock radio goes off. (**Guglielmo Marconi** perfected wireless transmission.) The first thing you do is turn on the lights. (The three-way light bulb was invented by **Alessandro Dandini**.) As you wash yourself in the shower (plumbing, a concept perfected by the **Romans**), you sing a few songs to yourself. '*Chattanooga Choo-Choo*' (written by **Salvatore Guaragna**, aka Harry Warren) or '*Moon River*' (**Henry Mancini**). Or maybe you prefer a Bruce Springsteen song (his maternal family name is **Zirilli**), or something by Madonna (born **Madonna Louise Ciccone**). At the breakfast table, you usually opt for an espresso or cappuccino (**Italian coffees**), but today you're in a hurry and make some good, old-fashioned American instant coffee. (**Vince Marotta** invented the 'Mr. Coffee' machines, which were popularized by their famous spokesman, baseball great, **Joe DiMaggio**.) Your throat feels a little scratchy, so on your way out the door you pop a small lozenge in your mouth. (The cough drop was created by **Vincent R. Ciccone**.) As you sprint to your car, you nearly trip over the Radio Flyer red wagon left in your driveway by a neighbor's kid. (**Antonio Pasin** invented that wagon in 1917.) You hop into your Chrysler (businessman **Lee Iacocca** saved the company in the '80s), and turn your radio on again (**Marconi**). There is talk of diplomatic peace efforts in the Middle East. (**Anthony Zinni** is the current, four-star general overseeing US troops in the Persian Gulf.) You make a quick call to work on your cell phone. (**Antonio Meucci** invented an early-model telephone years before Alexander Graham Bell.) You tell them you'll be a little late, since you remembered to pick up an office report from a print shop in a mall. (The American shopping mall was created by two developers: **William Cafaro and Edward J. DeBartolo Sr.**) While at the mall, you make a quick visit to Barnes and Noble (built by CEO **Leonard Riggio** into the nation's largest upscale bookstore). You're a fan of Ed McBain's mystery novels (McBain's real name is **Salvatore Lombino**), so you decide to buy one to read while flying out for a business meeting next week in Detroit (city founded by explorer **Alfonso Tonti**). You run to the print shop to pay for your report; however, all you have is change, so you have to use a few US 'peace dollar' coins. (**Theresa De Francisci** served as the model for Miss Liberty's face.) You remind yourself that you need to get to the bank. (Banking was codified in **Renaissance Italy**; also, **A.P. Giannini** created the Bank of America and branch banking.) While at work, you pound away on your computer. (Entrepreneur **Frank Sordello** created the tachometer, the device that speeds up information.) Lunch finally arrives. Some co-workers choose to run outside to a Subway store (created by **Frank De Luca**). Others prefer going to McDonald's for a Big Mac (created by franchise owner **Jim Delligatti**). You, however, are going the diet route: broccoli (developed by the **Broccoli** family of Italy), some

peanuts (Planters company founded by **Amedeo Obici**), and maybe a low-fat ice cream cone (**Italo Marcioni**). You eat light so you can use your remaining lunchtime to work out at the company's health facility. (**The Romans** started the concept of health clubs; also, fitness expert Charles Atlas was born **Angelo Siciliano**.) Time to go home! You drive down well-paved roads (**the Romans** set the standard). You pass by a federal office building with an American flag displayed outside, recalling those famous words from the Declaration of Independence, 'all men are created equal' (words suggested to Thomas Jefferson by his best friend and neighbor, Italian political writer **Filippo Mazzei**). There is nothing but junk mail when you get home, though some of the letters do feature a stamp honoring World War II's famous 'Rosie the Riveter' (**Rosie Bonavita**). There is a telephone message from your little niece, asking you to buy her a videotape of 'Snow White' for her birthday (featuring **Adriana Caselotti's** voice as the heroine). It has been a long, hard day, so you just want to relax in your Jacuzzi (courtesy of the **Jacuzzi** family). You might complement the experience by drinking Italian wine, from Italy or California, or by listening to some jazz (**Nick LaRocca** and his New Orleans band played the first 'jazz' record). Before going to bed, you pay a few outstanding bills, making sure your checkbook balances. (**Luca Pacioli** invented double-entry bookkeeping.) Your television drones on quietly, featuring footage of Congress debating a new initiative. (America's Founding Fathers borrowed the concept of a Senate from the **Romans**.) A commercial promotes travel to the Midwestern states (which were purchased for the US by fur trader **Francesco Vigo**). You turn off the television and climb into bed, feeling safe and secure in living in one of the greatest nations on earth, America (named after explorer **Amerigo Vespucci**). ore di **Amerigo Vespucci**).