

# BOLETIN

## BOGIANEN IN ACTION

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### Giulia and the Barolo Boys

Our International Vice President, liaison to the Regione Piemonte, selfless advisor and frequent *Boletín* contributor, Maria De Venezia, has graced us once again with an interesting item, this time regarding the French-born last Marchesa di Barolo. *Ad integrazione*, as the Italians would say, of the article that follows, you might want to take a look at a 2014 documentary, *Barolo Boys*, about recent advances in the production and marketing of “The Wine of Kings.” Extensive trailers of the film are available, free of charge, on Youtube. Of course, the first “Barolo Boys” were those hired by Giulia after the Marchese’s death in 1838.

### Giulia Falletti di Barolo, Apostola delle Carceri e Madre Del Barolo

Giulia was born in France in 1786 as Juliette Victoriene Françoise de Colbert, and she was educated in art, music, and the Italian and German languages. During the French Revolution, traumatized by the deaths of her aunt and grandmother under the infamous guillotine, Giulia’s parents fled to Germany, thence to Holland and Belgium, where her mother died.

After Napoleon’s coronation as Emperor, the family returned to France, and in 1804 Giulia served at the court of Empress Josephine. There she met a young Piedmontese nobleman, Carlo Tancredi Falletti, Marchese di Barolo, four years her junior. They married in 1806 and relocated to Torino in 1814.

The two had in common a deep religious faith and a desire to aid others less fortunate. The couple didn’t have children of their own, and they viewed the poor as their adopted children, even providing free education for them. Giulia herself founded religious congregations as well as institutes for women and children victims of prostitution. She visited prisons and helped the inmates to live better lives while in jail. Silvio Pellico—a patriot of the Risorgimento and a former prisoner himself—was the couple’s librarian at the Palazzo Barolo, and Giulia provided him with an annual pension until his death.

Giulia was close to three famous “social saints” of 19th-century Torino: Giuseppe Cafasso, minister to the condemned and her spiritual advisor, the patron of the infirm Giuseppe Cottolengo, and the educator of at-risk youth Don Giovanni Bosco. The “Apostola delle Carceri” herself might soon attain that exalted status. In 2015, Papa Francesco declared her “Venerable,” the second rung on the ladder to sainthood.

After Carlo Tancredi’s death in 1838, Giulia hired and worked with French enologists, who transformed the Nebbiolo grapes from her husband’s estate in the Langhe and changed the formerly sweet wine into the dry age-worthy powerhouse known today as Barolo. She built temperature-controlled cellars thus enabling reliable vinification. She was also a creative promoter of the wine by sending 325 barrels to King Carlo Alberto—a barrel for each day of the year except, of course, for the 40 days of Lent, as she was so very devout. Barolo eventually gained a reputation as “The Wine of Kings and the King of Wines.”

Currently, with the support of the Opera Pia Barolo and the Abbona wine-making family, Giulia Falletti di Barolo’s legacy has finally been officially acknowledged. On January 17, 2026, 162 years after her death in 1864, a bronze statue of Giulia was unveiled in Torino. Created by the sculptor Gabriele Garborino Ru, it brilliantly depicts her pioneering prison reforms, emphasizing charity, human dignity, and the redemption of marginalized women. At its inauguration, the President of the Piedmont regional government, Alberto Cirio, declared, “Giulia ha lasciato un segno profondo nel cuore del Piemonte.”

*Maria De Venezia*



### Check-Out our Website!

We have a newly remastered and updated website: [www.piemontesica.com](http://www.piemontesica.com). There, you will find information on our region, our organization, articles from back issues of the *Boletín*, regional recipes, and how to become a member.

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## Poste Khedevie Egiziane

The above phrase appears at the bottom of a series of Egyptian stamps from the 1870s. The ruler of Egypt at the time was called the Khedive and his rule the Khedivate, even though the country was officially a province of the Ottoman Empire. What is so odd about those stamps is that the inscription is *in Italian* and is the equivalent of “Royal Egyptian Post.”



Why? Perhaps because of the centuries-old presence of Venetian and Genoese merchants and colonizers, Italian was for a long time the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. Travelers from the West mentioned this in accounts of their voyages. It was noted by the Englishman Thomas Nugent in 1747 and by the American Bayard Taylor in 1855. I have a postcard sent from a forwarding agent in Malta to an exporter in Athens, dating from 1898 and written totally in Italian. In 1893, the Neapolitan writer Matilde Serao remarked that “*l'idioma gentile*” was the Western language most spoken in Palestine. Even today on the Bosphorus, Turkish seafaring commands are still given in Italian.

But there's a more direct and contemporaneous reason for the use of Italian on those Egyptian *francobolli*: Italians ran the country's post office! A private postal system was established in Egypt by Carlo Meratti in 1821, catering to Europeans who wanted to send correspondence and packages back home. In 1857 the government authorized that service to deliver mail between Egyptian cities. Then in 1865, under Khedive Ismail Pasha, Egypt bought the enterprise from the Meratti family and named Giacomo Muzzi as the country's first postmaster general. His successor was Cesare Musso, who held that post from 1873 to 1903.

Now, *Musso* can't be a more Piemontese surname! The family hailed from Castelnuovo d'Asti and had been present in Egypt since the Napoleonic invasion of 1798. Another family member, Umberto Musso, was the personal physician of King Fouad, father of the last Khedive, King Farouk.

P.S. Another Piemontese, Evaristo Caretti of Pinerolo, had been postmaster general of Imperial China. Our *Boletín* for Summer 2014 ran an extensive article on Caretti by his son Giovanni.

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## Giuseppe Maria Francesco Vigo, American Patriot



Known in America as Francis Vigo, our hero was a soldier, a fur trader, a spy and—*Believe it or not!*—a financial backer of early U.S. currency. Born in Mondovi in 1747, Vigo, whose surname is coincidentally that of a major city in Galicia, Spain, enrolled in the army of that country at age 20 and was stationed in Cuba and subsequently in New Orleans. (Louisiana was at the time under Spanish rule.) In 1772, he left the military to dedicate himself to the lucrative fur trade, first in St. Louis and then in Vincennes, in present-day Indiana.

In 1778, he offered his services as a spy to George Rogers Clark, commander of American revolutionary forces on the northwestern frontier, then part of the British province of Quebec. Because of his intimate knowledge of the landscape and his status as citizen of a neutral nation, Spain, he was able to inform the Americans of enemy positions and forces, leading to the capture of Vincennes in 1779.

However, Vigo's assistance to the nascent United States didn't stop there. He financed Clark's abortive campaign to take Fort Detroit, and when Canadians refused to accept payment in “continental paper,” he provided the currency with his personal financial backing.

Francis Vigo died without heirs in Vincennes in 1836. In the meantime, he had become a U.S. citizen, an Indiana county had been named for him, and he had been instrumental in founding the state's first college, Vincennes University.

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## Dateline San Francisco, 1912

The daily newspaper *L'Italia* in its issue of December 17, 1912, ran an obituary of Giorgio Caglieri, born in Carrù near Mondovi in the province of Cuneo on May 14, 1839. He came to San Francisco while still a teenager (the paper says age 17 or 18) and found a job as a bookkeeper with Daneri & Co., one of the leading import houses on the Pacific Coast. He subsequently became a partner in the Fugazi Travel Agency, was one of the founders of Columbus Savings & Loan, and the first cashier of Bank of Italy. At the time of death, one of his sons was a San Francisco city supervisor, Dr. Guido Caglieri. Giorgio Caglieri was a fervent Italian patriot and a founding member of the Speranza Italiana Masonic Lodge.