

How the Corato Church archives compensate for the limitations of the *Stato Civile* records

Despite the title of this article, I would venture to say that genealogists researching their *coratino* origins are quite well served by the Italian State archives – the *Stato Civile* - in many respects. Chief of these is the fact that not one *Stato Civile* register is missing for any year from 1809 to 1910. Corato is fortunate in this respect, as the same cannot be said of all *comuni* in Puglia. In particular, genealogists will appreciate that marriage records during the period 1835 to 1865 usually give not only exact birth dates of the bride and groom, but also the date of death of their parents (if deceased), and also the grandfather's date of death if the father of the bride or groom is deceased.

Most importantly, the Italian State web-site *Antenati.it* has facilitated the task of the genealogical researcher by creating digital indexes of Corato birth records from 1878 to 1898, and by making this indexation available online under the heading *Trova I Nomi*. The indexation results in an enormous saving of time since all the Corato *Stato Civile* birth indexes from 1868 up to 1910 show only the child's Christian name and surname, omitting even the father's name.

So why was the digital indexing of the *Stato Civile* birth records for the years from 1868 to 1878 and from 1898 to 1910 (1901-10 published online only on Family-search.org) neglected by *Antenati.it* ? These are crucial years for identifying people who emigrated, whether to the USA, France, or elsewhere. The answer to the question no doubt lies in the magnitude of the task at national level : Corato is but one of 54 -58 *comuni* whose archives have been indexed in the Province of Bari, which, in turn, is also only one of 65 Provinces or *sezioni* whose birth records have been indexed.

However, we are concerned primarily with Corato. On the whole, the *Stato Civile* records compare favorably with those of other countries, such as Britain and France. The limitations of the *Stato Civile* that we point out here concern only this locality, but they are significant in that they tend to handicap the research process, in particular when the ultimate goal is to facilitate historical research on migration from Corato.

Temporal limitations of the *Stato Civile* records

- the *Stato Civile* records start only in 1809. So the researcher today has to be content with an approximate limit of about 1780 – if one refers to the supposed birth dates of parents mentioned in the earliest *Stato Civile* birth records – or 1750, from information found in death records. Such approximations are often insufficient to properly identify a family in an endogamous society such as Corato, where marriage among cousins and homonyms was frequent.

Absence of some *Stato Civile* indexes

- A number of *Stato Civile* indexes are totally absent online and do not appear to exist in any form : the 1809 and 1899 birth indexes, and the 1895, 1899, and 1900 death indexes.

Incomplete digitization of *Stato Civile* birth record indexes

- As stated above, for a period of a total of 24 years, the indexes of Corato birth records have not been digitized by *Antenati.it* (1878 and 1898 having been only partially completed). Consequently, at the present time, the researcher has no choice but to examine all the birth records for a particular surname in a given year during the 24 year period, if the goal is to identify not only all the children of a particular couple, but also who emigrated among them : a very time-consuming process. Access to the Corato Church records would make up for the limitations in the indexing, since the indexes of baptism records invariably mention the father's Christian name (see Appendix 1) ; and the acts themselves not just the father's and mother's Christian names, but frequently also the grandparents' on either side.

Frequent absence of marginal notes on marriage in *Stato Civile* birth records

- Within the *Stato Civile* birth records, the marginal notes (introduced in the 1860s) indicating the future marriage(s) of an infant, can be a great help to the researcher. Unfortunately, they are often absent. This can occasion a substantial increase in the time required to properly identify a person (in particular if the marriage took place after 1910), when there are likely to be several homonyms living at the same time in Corato. The Church archives can often compensate for the absence of these marginal notes (see Appendix 2).

Imprecisions of the *Stato Civile* records

- The *Stato Civile* records are nearly all complete, but we have nevertheless noted a number of imprecisions (see Appendix 3). Moreover, it has to be said that the scribes whose task it was to make up the indexes were hard put to maintain clarity, year in, year out. By the end of their working lives, some of their indexes are very hard to read, especially if the ink has faded. This particularly true for some registers during the period between 1844 and 1853.

Improving access to genealogical resources to pave the way for historical research on migration from Corato

In most cases, the first reflex of a person looking for his (or her) origins – in other words an amateur genealogist or family historian - is to discover his (or her) ancestors as far back and as accurately as possible. In this respect, it has to be said that the researcher is likely to be frustrated by not having access to the baptism, marriage and burial records of the Chiesa Matrice in Corato, which go back to about 1582. At the present time, these limitations are logically a disincentive for the development of *coratini* genealogy.

Our hypothesis is that if a genealogical researcher's primary goal is satisfied, he or she will also be encouraged to delve further into family history to discover who emigrated, and where ; and to identify who remained behind. One can expect that improved access to all resources that help to establish a person's identity, both genealogical and official (such as travel documents), should also benefit historical

research on migration. Not least, it would surely help to identify with precision the various waves of emigration, and who participated in them.

The remit of our project entitled 'A tale of two twinned cities : Corato and Grenoble' is not only to achieve the genealogical objective of having the Church's archives put online but also to supplement this by the digitization of passport applications by emigration candidates (kept at the *Comune* in Corato) ; of expired residence permits and of naturalization documents (kept at the Departmental archives in Grenoble) ; perhaps also of the archives of companies that employed immigrants. Clearly, having these also put online (subject to existing laws regarding privacy) should be of greatest interest to students of *Coratini* migration, anywhere in the world : students at the universities of Bari and of Grenoble are already working on this subject, and it is hoped that these resources will be available to universities further afield, in the USA, in particular.

The Church's archival role compensates for widespread illiteracy during the migratory years

In an April 2020 article entitled 'The genealogical role of the Church of Corato (Puglia, Italy)', we suggested that the genealogical role of the Church seems to have been a part of its social mission at a time when predominant illiteracy was a potential cause of mistakes in the *Stato Civile*. In fact, mistakes of all kinds were numerous in the *Stato Civile* records, including many cases of mistaken identity (see Appendix 4). So the Church reserved several registers for recording the genealogical implications of forthcoming marriages, and played a major role by carefully examining cases where the genealogical identity of bride and groom was not clear. Who better than the priest who baptized, married, and buried the faithful could ensure that errors were kept to a minimum ?

Although such illiteracy is no longer prevalent, when we examine today the *Stato Civile* records during the 19th century, and especially for the 30 years or so following 1880 when emigration occurred, we are still faced with the consequences of the illiteracy that existed during that period, which prevented families from verifying what was written. For the historical as well as the genealogical researcher, the greater accuracy of the Church's parochial records, if they were available, would help to alleviate the negative effects of such illiteracy.

Conclusions

Identifying people who can provide testimony of migration

There is undoubtedly academic interest in the experience of transnational families, such as are formed as a result of migration, and who can be identified by genealogical research. The basic premise of our project is that improving access to resources will both encourage descendants of *coratini* emigrants to research their origins and also better provide historians with material for researching various aspects of the migration, not least by accurately identifying people who could be interviewed to provide testimony. Undoubtedly, the putting online of the Corato Church parochial

archives, supplementing very efficiently the *Stato Civile* records, could give an impetus to migration studies regarding the Puglia region.

Putting the Church's archives online would benefit all, locally and internationally

Indeed we are conscious that if the Corato parochial archives are put online, it will be a 'first' as far as the area under the authority of the Archbishop of Trani is concerned. We are hopeful of a positive outcome, since a number of diocese in Italy have taken this step, given also that the proper conservation of this precious resource would gain from its being online. Not only would it be a great time-saver for all concerned – including in Corato itself, for the priest in charge and also for an under-staffed *Stato Civile* - but it would also facilitate research at the global level which is that of the *coratini* migration itself.

APPENDIX 1

Comparison between the *Stato Civile* and Church archives indices for the period 1868-1910

The *Stato Civile* indices for the periods 1868-78 and 1898-1910 have not been digitized ; so, for example, the *Stato Civile* index for 1903 looks like this (surname, Christian name, record number) :

INDICE ANNUALE		NUMERO di registrazione	INDICE ANNUALE		NUMERO di registrazione
COGNOME E NOME			COGNOME E NOME		
Belloni	Anna	1243	Belloni	Antonio	1243
Belloni	Giuseppe	1244	Belloni	Anna	1244
Belloni	Francesca	1245	Belloni	Anna	1245
Belloni	Giuseppe	1246	Belloni	Anna	1246
Belloni	Francesca	1247	Belloni	Anna	1247
Belloni	Giuseppe	1248	Belloni	Anna	1248
Belloni	Francesca	1249	Belloni	Anna	1249
Belloni	Giuseppe	1250	Belloni	Anna	1250
Belloni	Francesca	1251	Belloni	Anna	1251
Belloni	Giuseppe	1252	Belloni	Anna	1252
Belloni	Francesca	1253	Belloni	Anna	1253
Belloni	Giuseppe	1254	Belloni	Anna	1254
Belloni	Francesca	1255	Belloni	Anna	1255
Belloni	Giuseppe	1256	Belloni	Anna	1256
Belloni	Francesca	1257	Belloni	Anna	1257
Belloni	Giuseppe	1258	Belloni	Anna	1258
Belloni	Francesca	1259	Belloni	Anna	1259
Belloni	Giuseppe	1260	Belloni	Anna	1260
Belloni	Francesca	1261	Belloni	Anna	1261
Belloni	Giuseppe	1262	Belloni	Anna	1262
Belloni	Francesca	1263	Belloni	Anna	1263
Belloni	Giuseppe	1264	Belloni	Anna	1264
Belloni	Francesca	1265	Belloni	Anna	1265
Belloni	Giuseppe	1266	Belloni	Anna	1266
Belloni	Francesca	1267	Belloni	Anna	1267
Belloni	Giuseppe	1268	Belloni	Anna	1268
Belloni	Francesca	1269	Belloni	Anna	1269
Belloni	Giuseppe	1270	Belloni	Anna	1270
Belloni	Francesca	1271	Belloni	Anna	1271
Belloni	Giuseppe	1272	Belloni	Anna	1272
Belloni	Francesca	1273	Belloni	Anna	1273
Belloni	Giuseppe	1274	Belloni	Anna	1274
Belloni	Francesca	1275	Belloni	Anna	1275
Belloni	Giuseppe	1276	Belloni	Anna	1276
Belloni	Francesca	1277	Belloni	Anna	1277
Belloni	Giuseppe	1278	Belloni	Anna	1278
Belloni	Francesca	1279	Belloni	Anna	1279
Belloni	Giuseppe	1280	Belloni	Anna	1280
Belloni	Francesca	1281	Belloni	Anna	1281
Belloni	Giuseppe	1282	Belloni	Anna	1282
Belloni	Francesca	1283	Belloni	Anna	1283
Belloni	Giuseppe	1284	Belloni	Anna	1284
Belloni	Francesca	1285	Belloni	Anna	1285
Belloni	Giuseppe	1286	Belloni	Anna	1286
Belloni	Francesca	1287	Belloni	Anna	1287
Belloni	Giuseppe	1288	Belloni	Anna	1288
Belloni	Francesca	1289	Belloni	Anna	1289
Belloni	Giuseppe	1290	Belloni	Anna	1290
Belloni	Francesca	1291	Belloni	Anna	1291
Belloni	Giuseppe	1292	Belloni	Anna	1292
Belloni	Francesca	1293	Belloni	Anna	1293
Belloni	Giuseppe	1294	Belloni	Anna	1294
Belloni	Francesca	1295	Belloni	Anna	1295
Belloni	Giuseppe	1296	Belloni	Anna	1296
Belloni	Francesca	1297	Belloni	Anna	1297
Belloni	Giuseppe	1298	Belloni	Anna	1298
Belloni	Francesca	1299	Belloni	Anna	1299
Belloni	Giuseppe	1300	Belloni	Anna	1300

Absence of the child's father's Christian name makes it very difficult to identify the children of a couple, whereas the Church archives' indexes for baptisms during the same periods invariably mention the father's name (e.g. top right, "Cipri Filippo di Michele, 154) :

INDICE DEL 1903

Cagnone Antonio di Michele	22	Ciparotti Cataldo di Nicola	61
Calabrese Antonio di (pat.)	-	Caluso Cataldo di Giuseppe	-
Calabrese Felice di Michele	24	Calabrese Maria di Michele	66
Calabrese Luigi di Domenico	-	Calabrese M ^{te} Lucia di Lucrezio	-
Calabrese Vincenzo di Cataldo	30	Calabrese Nicola di Franco	68
Caluso Matteo di Luigi	31	Calabrese Antonio ^{Luca} Donna ^{Gracia} Donna	76
Caluso Luigi di Antonio	34	Calabrese M ^{te} Giuseppe di Giuseppe	84
Calabrese Vincenzo di Francesco	35	Calabrese Antonio di Domenico	85
Calabrese Michele di Filippo	-	Ciparotti Anna di Michele	86
Caluso M ^{te} Luigi di Cataldo	39	Ciparotti Serafina di Giuseppe	-
Carato Maria di Vito	-	Cataldo Maria di Luigi	-
Carnello Maria di Giuseppe	-	Carnelli Michelina di Pasquale	87
Carnello Cataldo di Giuseppe	44	Catena Antonia di Giuseppe	90
Carabini Justina di Vincenzo	-	Cataldo Maria di Luigi	91
Caratello Annina di Domenico	48	Cataldi Angela di Vito	93
Caracciolo Lucia di Michele	50	Catalini Leonardo di Alfonso	95
Caruso Maria di Cataldo	52	Casuso Francesco di Giorgio	96
Caricelli Giuseppina di Jacopo	-	Caratello Michelina di Cataldo	97
Caricelli Jacopo di Giuseppe	53	Carnello Francesco di Flaviano	99
Caratello Cataldo di Francesco	55	Casuso Cataldo di Vito	-
Caratello Filippo di Luigi	-	Caratello Silvana di Luigi	102
Caricelli Jacopo di Jacopo	56	Casuso Luigi di Tomaso	104
Caracciolo Maria di Pasquale	57	Casuso Nicola di Vincenzo	105
Carpino M ^{te} Giuseppe di Carlo	61	Casuso Giuseppina di Domenico	107
Caracciolo Maria di Cataldo	58		

INDICE DEL 1903

Calabrese Maria di Pasquale	108	Caso Filippo di Michele	134
Craxi Giuseppe di Felice	-	Castatore Luigi di Antonio	-
Caracciolo Felice di Pasquale	111	Cataldi Maria di Francesco	-
Catalini Felice di Luigi	113	Cataldi Justina di Giuseppe	154
Caradonna Michele M ^{te} di Vincenzo	114	Caratello Luigi di Giuseppe	158
Carallo Giovanni di Pasquale	-	Caracciolo Giuseppe di Alfonso	160
Carallo Maria di Giuseppe	115	Carato Lucia di Pasquale	161
Cataldi Angela M ^{te} di Luigi	118	Caso Maria di Antonio	163
Carnelli Giuseppe di Leonardo	-	Caso Antonio di Francesco	-
Caporale Angela M ^{te} di Vincenzo	121	Caracciolo Pasquale di Cataldo	-
Cavalle Giuseppe di Vincenzo	122	Carato Pasquale di Domenico	166
Cavalle M ^{te} Lucia di Luigi	123	Carnello Michele di Lucrezio	167
Cataldi Anna di Francesco	126	Caracciolo Maria di Luigi	168
Caso Filippo di Cataldo	128	Casuso Cataldo di Antonio	-
Cataldi Michele di Cataldo	129	Carato Pasquale di Alfonso	173
Catalini Antonio di Cataldo	130	Caso M ^{te} Lucrezia di Cataldo	176
Casuso Luigi di Filippo	136	Caracciolo Giuseppe di Domenico	-
Cataldi Filippo di Michele	140	Carato Silvana di Lucrezio	178
Carnelli Maria di Giuseppe	143	Carpino Maria di Giuseppe	179
Casuso Lucia di Vito	145	Carallo Francesco di Luigi	181
Chico Domenico di Cataldo	148	Caracciolo Maria di Pasquale	183
Chico Leonardo di Salvatore	149	Caracciolo Giuseppe di Alfonso	-
Casuso Michele di Luigi	151	Caracciolo Maria di Cataldo	184
Cataldi Maria di Michele	153	Casuso Maria di Carlo	186

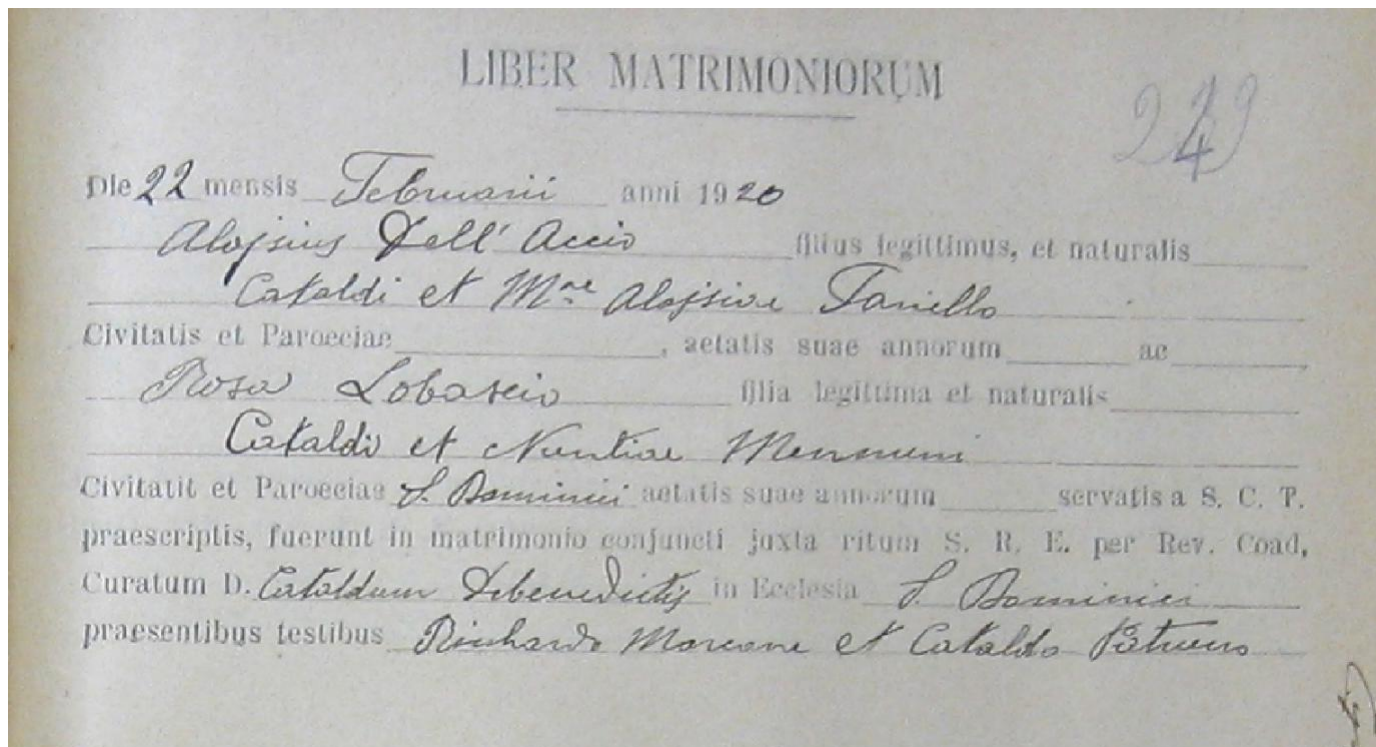
APPENDIX 2

How the Church archives can help to distinguish between 2 homonyms :

Joseph Marzocca, whose paternal grandfather Giuseppe emigrated to Grenoble in 1920, was unable to identify his maternal grandfather from the records available online. He knew his name was Luigi Dell'Accio, that he was born in 1891, and that he married his grandmother Rosa Lobascio, but he had to choose between two Luigi Dell'Accio's found on Antenati.it after a search with *Trova I Nomi* :

Luigi Dell'Accio Padre : Domenico Dell'Accio Madre : Chiara Ferrata Apri	Comune/Località : Corato, Bari, Italy Data : 23 Jul 1891 Tipologia di Atto : Nascite
Luigi Dell'Accio Padre : Cataldo Dell'Accio Madre : Maria Luigia Furiello Apri	Comune/Località : Corato, Bari, Italy Data : 18 Jun 1891 Tipologia di Atto : Nascite

Unfortunately, neither of these birth records had a marginal note about the marriage to Rosa Lobascio. To find the Stato Civile marriage record would normally have meant writing to the Stato Civile in Corato and waiting at best several weeks before receiving an answer. So the 1920 Church record for the marriage was a godsend :



APPENDIX 3

Imprecisions noted in the *Stato Civile* records for Corato :

Indexes totally missing: 1809, 1897,1899 (nati) ; 1895, 1899, 1900 (morti).

Stato Civile napoleonico (1809-1815) :

Nati : mother's father missing (1809,10,11,12) ; father of both parents missing (1813,14,15)

Morti : both father and mother of deceased missing (up to September 1809).

Stato Civile della restaurazione (1816-1860) :

Nati : father of both parents is missing (1816,17,18,19,20,21,22) ; father of child's mother is missing (1823,24,25,26, 27).

Matrimoni : In some rare cases, such as the marriage register for 1819, the register is incomplete : it ends at November 27th, folio 202. 23 records are therefore missing, out of a total of 225.

Morti : occasionally, the deceased's husband or wife may be omitted, especially when there are multiple marriages and the first marriage ended a long time before the deceased's date of death.

Stato Civile italiano (1861-1910) :

Nati : the father of the child's father is not mentioned in 92, 96 and 99. **Matrimoni** : the 1887 and 1893 indices are totally missing, but this is compensated for by the fact that indices are available for both years in the 'pubblicazioni di matrimoni'.

Only the groom's name appears in the matrimony indexes for 1871,73,74, 78 ; fortunately, the 'pubblicazioni di matrimoni' indexes for the same years mention both bride and groom (though for 1874, a few brides are missing in the index).

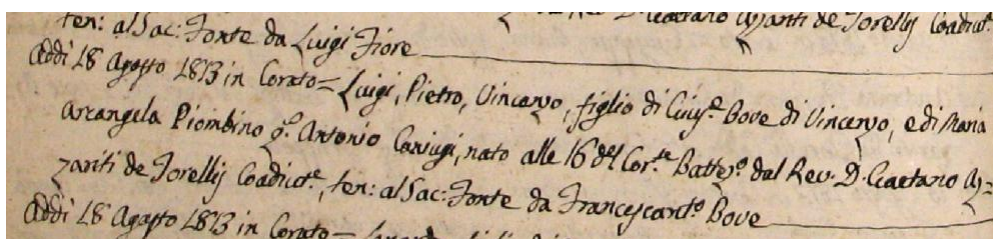
Appendix 4

A case of mistaken identity

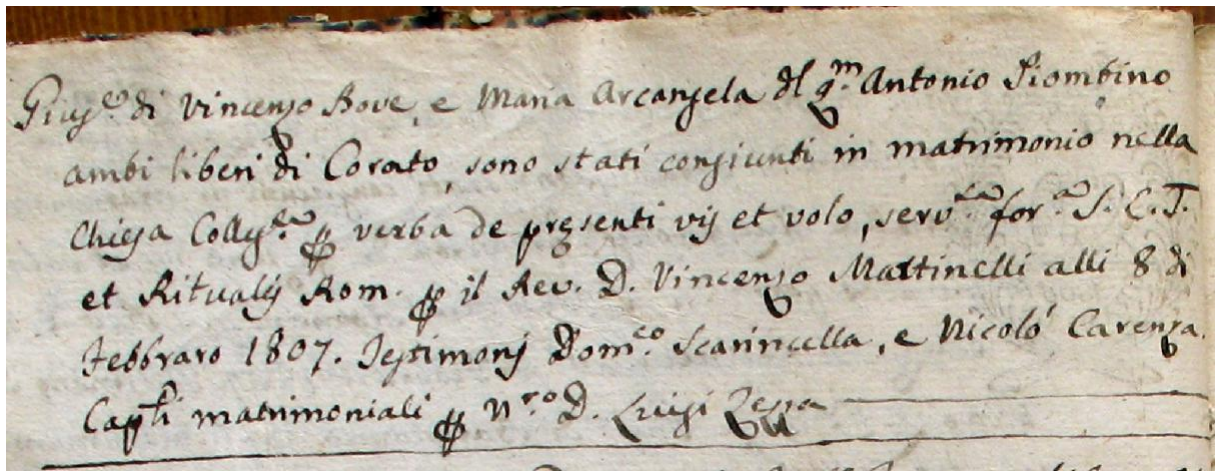
The Stato Civile records below give a different mother for Luigi Pietro Vincenzo Bove : the 1813 birth record on the left says she is Arcangela Balducci, the 1846 marriage record on the right, that she is Maria Arcangela Piombino.



The 1813 baptism record shows Maria Arcangela Piombino to be the mother :



Luigi's parents' Church marriage record in 1807 removes all doubt. Luigi's mother was certainly Maria Arcangela Piombino :



Luigi di Vincenzo Bove, e Maria Arcangela Figlia di Antonio Piombino
ambedue liberi di Corato, sono stati congiunti in matrimonio nella
Chiesa Collegiata per verba de presenti vij et volo, servando for. S. C. J.
et Rituale Rom. per il Sec. D. Vincenzo Mattinelli alli 8 di
Febbraio 1807. Testimoni Dom. Scariucella, e Nicolò Carenza.
Capli matrimoniali per N. D. Luigi Zera

Annex 5

Some Italian diocese have put their parish archives online :

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Italy_Church_Records#Finding_Church_Records

Wiki articles describing online collections, including a link to the records, are found at:

- [Italy, Benevento, Arcidiocesi di Benevento, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Biella, Borriana, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Biella, Ponderano, Parrocchia di San Lorenzo, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Caltanissetta, Diocesi di Caltanissetta, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Catania, Diocesi di Acireale, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Catania, Arcidiocesi di Catania, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Catania, Diocesi di Caltagirone, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, L'Aquila, Camarda, Parrocchia di San Giovanni Battista, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Mantova, Brede, Parrocchia di Santa Margherita Vergine e Martire, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Barano d'Ischia, Parrocchia di San Sebastiano Martire, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Fontana, Parrocchia di Santa Maria della Mercede - La Sacra, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Lacco Ameno, Parrocchia di SS. Annunziata in Santa Maria delle Grazie, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Panza, Parrocchia di San Leonardo Abate, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Sant'Angelo, Parrocchia di San Michele Arcangelo, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Serrara, Parrocchia di Santa Maria del Carmine, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Napoli, Testaccio, Parrocchia di San Giorgio Martire, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Palermo, Diocesi di Monreale, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Pola and Trieste, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)

- [Italy, Rovigo, Arquà Polesine, Parrocchia di Sant'Andrea Apostolo, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Siracusa, Sortino, Parrocchia di San Giovanni Apostolo ed Evangelista, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Terni, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Trento, Diocesi di Trento, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)
- [Italy, Vicenza, Casoni, Parrocchia di San Rocco, Catholic Church Records - FamilySearch Historical Records](#)

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