

Sources for American History in Three Italian Archives

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INVESTIGATORS interested in sources for American history have visited Italy all too infrequently although many such sources are scattered over the peninsula. The American trace can be encountered unexpectedly; near the tomb of Elizabeth Barrett Browning in a Protestant cemetery in Florence, for instance, another tomb bears this epitaph:

*Sacred to the memory of Th. Jefferson Page
of Virginia Major of Artillery
Confederate States of America
Born August 3, 1839 Died June 16, 1864*

Thus even cemeteries constitute an Italian source for American history. There are many other sources. The large number of private manuscript collections, such as that of the Ricasoli family, are mines of information.¹ The recollections of Massimo d'Azeglio (particularly those of 1876 comparing the 1861 Emancipation Act of Tsar Alexander II with President Lincoln's Proclamation);² the public and private libraries; the newspapers and magazines, particularly of Tuscany and Piedmont; the historical societies and institutes—these are only the minor sources. The major ones are the deliberations, decisions, statutes, and regulations of governmental agencies on the national as well as local levels.

As examples of the major sources, three of them—the Archivio di Stato in Naples, the Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri in Rome, and the Library and Archives of the Vatican—will be discussed in this paper.

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¹ Private collections are extensively described in Ludwig Pastor, "Le Biblioteche Private e specialmente quelle delle Famiglie Principesche di Roma," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Roma, 1903).

² Massimo d'Azeglio, *I Miei Ricordi* (Firenze, 1876).

ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI NAPOLI³

Of the several national archives (*Archivi di Stato*) in Italy, that in Naples holds the largest collections. These include the Farnese family collection, one of the largest family collections in Europe; the archives of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; and the voluminous records seized when the monasteries were suppressed in Sicily and southern Italy. Finding aids for these materials consist of excellent inventories and indexes. The records are sorted in bundles (*fasci*), each containing from 400 to 600 folios.

Records in the following series are of interest for American history:

I. Rappresentanza diplomatica napoletana negli Stati Uniti:

Fasce numero	Anni
5308	1806-9
5295	1839-53
1, 2	1839-53
5296	1855-59
3	1857-60
5297	1859-60

II. Rappresentanza diplomatica degli Stati Uniti a Napoli:

4, 5, 6	1816-60
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IV. Consoli degli Stati Uniti a Napoli:

3196, 3197	1797-1829
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V. Questioni diverse:

4464-4466	— crediti e convenzioni finanziarie (1812-17, 1824-29, 1832)
4210	— progetto di trattato di commercio (1783)
4485	— per un trattato di commercio (1846)
4502	— per un trattato di amicizia, navigazione, e commercio (1855)
4503	— per una convenzione di neutralità sul mare (1855)

In addition to series listed above there are the records of the Royal Secretary of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the papers in the possession of Francis II when he abandoned Naples on September

³ The author is indebted to Dr. Antonio Saladino, Director of the Archivio di Stato di Napoli, for much of the information given here. Detailed descriptions of the holdings are in B. Capasso, *L'Archivio di Stato in Napoli fino a tutto il 1898* (Napoli, 1900); Francesco Trinchera, *Degli Archivi napoletani, relazione* (Napoli, 1872); Nicola Barone, *Notizie riguardanti l'Archivio Farnesiano ora conservato nell'Archivio di Stato in Napoli* (Napoli, 1898); and Carl Russell Fish, *Guide to the Materials for American History in Roman and Other Italian Archives*, p. 229-236 (Washington, 1911).

6, 1860. Among them are a draft of a commercial treaty between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the United States for the year 1833 (bundle 1115), a copy of a commercial treaty between France and the United States (bundle 1125), and several despatches of the Bourbon Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Pasquale Massone, diplomatic representative to the United States from August 1860 to February 1866 (bundle 1370).

ARCHIVIO STORICO DEL MINISTERO DEGLI AFFARI ESTERI⁴

Perhaps no archives in Italy are so important to American history as those in the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Located near the Fontana di Trevi in Rome, this depository has the care of the diplomatic records of the Italian Government from 1861 and the earlier records of the Kingdom of Sardinia. The records are crowded into every nook and corner, although fully inventoried and sorted chronologically. The investigator is often rewarded by incidental discoveries. A hitherto unknown letter of Cavour, dated May 4, 1861, for instance, was found among the despatches to Giuseppe Bertinatti, the Italian Minister to the United States. The holdings pertinent to American history—particularly for Latin America—are too vast for detailed listing in this paper; they include instructions to Italian consular offices, despatches of these offices to the Ministero degli Affari Esteri, journals, letter books, catalogs, notes, newspaper clippings, and other items.

But the most important sources for American history in this depository are the consular despatches received. Those from England and France are rich in references to the course of events in the United States, particularly during the Civil War. The despatches of Bertinatti recount the course of the war with unusual perspicacity; his despatch on Appomattox vindicates the belief expressed in his despatch on the firing on Fort Sumter, four years earlier, that the Union could not be dissolved.

In the main, the records in this depository reflect the varied aspects of international affairs during the nineteenth century—a fund of infrequently consulted material.

⁴ The statements concerning this depository are derived largely from the author's own experience. H. Nelson Gay used its holdings to document several studies. See Gay, "Lincoln's Offer of a Command to Garibaldi," in *Century Magazine*, 75:63-74 (Nov. 1907); "Le Relazioni fra l'Italia e gli Stati Uniti," in *Nuova Antologia*, 16 Feb. 1907; and *Relazioni fra gli Stati Uniti e l'Italia negli anni 1847-1871* (Torino, 1907).

BIBLIOTECA VATICANA and ARCHIVIO VATICANO⁵

Leo XIII enlarged the Vatican Library by acquiring many special collections either by purchase or gift. He made it the largest archival repository in Europe. Showing a keen interest in historical studies, he opened the library in 1881 to scholars regardless of religious affiliation. He selected one of the foremost Catholic scholars, Professor Hergenröther of the University of Würzburg, as director; he favored and furthered the preparation of inventories and indexes.

The vast mass of pontifical archives to 1815 is centered in the Vatican Archives (Archivio Vaticano). The most important groups are the registers (*registra*), consisting of records of every class and description, including papal letters from the time of Innocent III (1198-1216) to a part of the pontificate of Pius VII (1800-23). They relate among other matters to the discoveries, explorations, and settlements in the New World and include diaries of visits by ecclesiastics to settlements, requests of priests for assignment to missionary work or for transfer, letters and instructions to and from America, reports, maps, charts, and *vitae* of the explorers, priests, and other persons. Events and episodes in the Americas are reported or reflected in items such as these:

8847 Heroic poem on Amerigo Vespucci written in the sixteenth century.

9450 Honorisiani Balsamini, "Della Patria, Familia e Vita di Christoforo Colombo." Seventeenth century.

9452-20 Fragment of the will of Columbus.

10364 "Differenza fra l'Inghilterra e le Colonie dell'America."

The archives of the Papal Secretariat (Archivio del Segretario di Stato) are perhaps the most important for a broad understanding of American development. In writing about this collection, Fish has stated that it

is the most important at Rome for the study . . . of the modern age; probably for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it is the most important in existence. . . . For the vast world-conflict which so constantly affected the development of America, and particularly for the naval contest for the control of the Atlantic, of commerce, and of colonies, it is to a great extent unique and possibly unequalled. Quite apart from research for special monographs, no student of American history could find a few months' reading in the *nunziature*

⁵ For considerable detail on the holdings of the Vatican Library and the Vatican Archives see Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 15-195; I. Carini, *Di alcuni Lavori ed Acquisti della Biblioteca Vaticana nel Pontificato di Leone XIII* (Roma, 1892); and Charles H. Haskins, "The Vatican Archives," in *American Historical Review*, 2: 40-58 (Oct. 1897).

of Spain and Portugal amiss. For the general study of the . . . papacy, its value is unexpectedly great, as so much general business passed through the hands of the nuncios.⁶

The material consists primarily of financial reports and newsletters received from papal emissaries. It includes reports on affairs, events, and persons within the districts of their jurisdiction.

Of the special collections in the Vatican Archives or Vatican Library the Barberini, Borgia, Capponi, and Ottoboni collections and the library of the Queen of Sweden are the most noted. For the Barberini collection, purchased by Leo XIII, there is a 36-volume inventory describing 12,000 items and an alphabetically arranged catalog; this collection contains materials concerning explorations, discoveries, problems with Indians, Jesuit missions, and many other topics relevant to America.

It has not been attempted in this paper to do more than suggest, by giving a few details about three important depositories that are especially rich in source material for American history, fruitful areas for investigators. It is a bit difficult to understand how these important materials, to which attention was called by both Fish and Haskins more than a half century ago, still are not being used effectively by scholars of American history.

⁶ Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Mystical Jargon

. . . Another suggestion—let's talk straight and simple . . . Let's cut out the mystical management jargon. Talk to the operating people in their terms.

Here's an example of what, I think, we should not do. Someone was writing about a records system and they said, "When one variable is cross-tabulated against another by means of the procedure described above, the minimum total number of manipulations of category cards is equal to the number of cards in the variable that has the smallest number of categories plus the product of the number of cards in one variable and the number of cards in the other." Now, all this guy was talking about was the peekaboo card system where you match punch cards by holding them up to the light to see which ones have holes in the same position, but that was this specialist's description.

—WILLIAM B. RICE, in an address before the Interagency Records Administration Conference, Washington, D.C., on May 17, 1963, as reported in IRAC, *What's Wrong With Records Management*, p. 14 (Washington, 1963).