

Italian Americans in California



The last Cars to Parade over Montgomery St.
BANC PIC 1996.003:105a--fALB

Room Five: Little Italy, San Francisco

Columbus Day

Since 1869, Columbus Day has been a major source of national pride for Italians in San Francisco regardless of regional origin. The selection of Columbus Day, rather than an Italian national holiday was deliberate in order to emphasize not only the Italian, but the American aspect of their culture. The celebration included a parade in which floats passed from Post and Montgomery to the City Gardens without touching Little Italy itself. Subsequent parades did include the neighborhood that organized the celebration. By 1886, floats were created in the shape of Columbus' three ships, as participants played a reenactment of Columbus' landing. Later, a beauty pageant named "The Crowning of Isabella" was also added to the festivities.

Angelo Noce was the driving force behind making Columbus Day a San Francisco tradition. Noce not only participated as a parade organizer, but fought to make the anniversary of Columbus' landing a state and national holiday. He also facilitated the gift of statues of Columbus and Isabella from D.O. Mills that stand in the rotunda of the State Capitol.