

immigration officials in the U.S. and Italy. He examined Sicilian police files, trying to establish the real identities and backgrounds of numerous New York criminals and determine which ones were wanted in Italy. He was also gathering evidence against members of the Sicilian Mafia who were wanted for crimes in the U.S. One of the men he was trying to extradite was Vito Cascio Ferro, who he had driven to New Orleans six years earlier. After working in New Orleans, Cascio Ferro returned to Palermo and became "*Capo di Tutti Capi*" (boss of all bosses) in Sicily.

In March, Petrosino received an anonymous message from someone who claimed to have information on Cascio Ferro. The informant asked to meet him in the city center, under Garibaldi's statue in the Piazza Marina. When Petrosino arrived on March 12, he was murdered by three gunmen. Rumors suggest that Cascio Ferro personally took part in the shooting, but it seems more likely that the Mafia Don would have left this job to three underlings.

The following day, Petrosino's Italian Branch received an anonymous letter stating that the New York Black Hand had arranged the murder. The letter named Joe Morello, Vincenzo Terranova, Ciro Terranova, Giuseppe Fontana, Ignazio Milone and Pietro Inzerillo. Since Cascio Ferro worked

with these men during his three-year stay in New York, their involvement is a possibility. We will probably never know for sure whether or not the letter was a hoax.

Joseph's wife Adelina later received her husband's belongings from Palermo. They included a gold pocketwatch and chain, a pair of gold cuff links and two suitcases containing clothes, letters and a check for \$12.40. Friends of the Petrosino's collected \$10,000 for their child, and Mrs. Petrosino received a \$1,000 per-year pension from the New York Police Department. Over 250,000 people joined the New York funeral procession which lasted over five hours. From the formation of the Italian Branch to the time of Petrosino's death, crime against Italian-Americans in New York had been reduced by half.

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Mailing Address:
Italian Heritage & Culture Committee
C/O Italian Cultural Institute
686 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10021
Telephone: (212) 642-2094
Web address:
www.italyculturemonth.org

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Lt. Joseph Petrosino 1860-1909

Lt. Joseph Petrosino dedicated his career to the fight against Italian-American crime organizations such as the Black Hand and Camorra. He even travelled to Sicily in an effort to extradite fugitives to New York and research the backgrounds of Mafia figures operating in the United States. This investigation led to his death in 1909.

By all accounts, Lt. Giuseppe "Joseph" Petrosino was a tough detective who took a hard line against Italian criminals, particularly the Black Hand. Founded in 1898 by Ignazio "Lupo" Saietta, the Black Hand Gang was a precursor to the Genovese Mafia family. Saietta's gang ran extortion and counterfeiting rackets in Manhattan. Lupo got involved with the Unione Siciliana, a charitable organization that helped Sicilians living in America. The Black Hand infiltrated the Unione for its own purposes, and Saietta was elected chairman.

In 1901, Petrosino obtained a search warrant for the offices of the Unione Siciliana where he believed the Black Hand had hidden the bodies of murder victims. His opinion proved correct, but no one in the NYPD guessed

the full extent of the slaughter they were to discover. The building, which became known as the "Murder Stable," concealed approximately sixty bodies. An exact body-count was impossible as most of the corpses had been cut up, some body parts were missing and it was difficult to identify which pieces were part of the same victim. Lupo was arrested on suspicion of murder, but denied all knowledge of the corpses hidden in his building. In the end, the police, with no proof Saietta had been involved, were forced to release him. But Petrosino was determined to bring the Black Hand to justice.

On April 14, 1903, the body of Benedetto Madonia was found in a barrel in Manhattan. He had been stabbed to death; and his body had been dismembered. Madonia's brother-in-law was Giuseppe DePrimo, a member of the Black Hand who was serving time for counterfeiting when the murder took place. Petrosino interviewed DePrimo who informed him that Madonia worked as a forger for the Black Hand and that there was some animosity between him and Joe Morello, Saietta's underboss.

Petrosino and his men arrested nine suspects from the Black Hand. They were Ignazio "Lupo" Saietta, Giuseppe "Joe" Morello, Gaetano Petto, Giuseppe Fontano, Tony Genoa, Giuseppe Favarro, Giovanni Pecorara,

Vito LoBaido and Vito Cascio Ferro. Petto, who reportedly committed the murder on Morello's orders, was convicted, but there was not enough evidence to link anyone else to the killing.

During the Madonia investigation, Petrosino discovered that one of the suspects was wanted for murder in Italy. Vito Cascio Ferro was a member of the Inglese Mafia family in Palermo, Sicily, and had fled to New York in 1900 to avoid a murder charge. Further inquiries revealed that another Black Hander, Paul DiCristina, had entered the U.S. under an assumed name in 1899. His real name was Paulo Marchese and he was another Palermo mafioso who was wanted for murder in Sicily. Petrosino tried to have the two gangsters deported, but they discovered what he was doing and fled to New Orleans.

In 1905, Petrosino was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and formed the Italian Branch, a squad of Italian-American detectives who infiltrated Italian gangs. The Italian Branch was responsible for the deportation of over 500 Italian criminals, the majority of whom worked for the Black Hand. One well-known story involves the famous tenor, Enrico Caruso, who was a friend of Petrosino. Caruso received a letter threatening violence unless money was paid to the Black Hand. The letter was signed with the

imprint of a black hand, a traditional blackmailing technique among secret societies throughout Italy. It is from such letters that New York's Black Hand got its name. Caruso co-operated with Petrosino and arranged to pay the money, but when the extortionist went to collect it, Petrosino was waiting for him. Ignoring official channels, the police lieutenant reportedly broke the man's legs, put him on a ship to Sicily, and threatened to shoot him if he ever returned.

Though Petrosino broke the rules in the case of a personal matter, most of the Italian Branch's deportations were carried out legally. One example is Enrico Alfano, a member of a Camorra in his hometown of Naples, Italy. In 1907, Alfano fled to the U.S. and began working for the New York branch of the Camorra. After only a few months in the U.S., Petrosino tracked Alfano down and released him into the custody of the Italian police.

In 1908, a former member of the Italian parliament named Pallizolo was driven out of the country. Pallizolo was a member of the Sicilian Mafia who began working for the Black Hand in New York. He arrived in the U.S. in 1908 and left voluntarily in the same year when he discovered that Petrosino was trying to deport him.

In 1909, Petrosino travelled to Palermo as part of a joint criminal investigation between police and