

HISTORICAL INFORMATION ABOUT CHARACTERS AND EVENTS

ITALY PROTECTS HER ART

Translation by Google: "On June 5, 1940, the superintendent of the Florentine Galleries **Giovanni Poggi** was in the hands a circular "urgent and secretive" of the ministry, with which they ordered the immediate implementation of all measures designed for the protection of the artistic heritage in case of conflict. Five days later, Italy would officially entered into the war." ([Website source in Italian](#))

THE LION

Medici Lion (Vacca's Lion) in the Loggia dei Lanzi in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, Italy.

The lion was not in the first round of protective coverings in June 5, 1940. Nor in autumn of 1942 when Michelangelo's *David* and *The Slaves* were protected. Sometime between mid-1943 and 1945, the lion and his friend (Fancelli's Lion) were removed. In 1945 the lions were returned– at some point after the war.

([Photo in 1934](#))

([Photo in 1936](#))

([Photo in September 1940 - Not everyone gets covered](#))

Partial coverage of statues, prior to German retreat. ([Photo from May 30, 1943](#)) YouTube video claiming to be from August 4, 1944, but I'm not sure all of the footage is, especially where the statues on the Loggia are still encased in brick, despite being moved to the Loggia Cellar in 1943. ([Video](#)—see 4minutes, 59 seconds—thank you Peter!)

Scaffolding still in place, July 22, 1945. ([Photo from July 22, 1945](#))

Translation by Matt DiLorenzo: "On page 9 it says: Art objects that could not be moved – frescoes in the churches, sculpted portals, fountains, tombs, inlaid decorations on the sides of churches – were covered to minimize the damage of the high grade explosives. Having ascertained that no adequate protection could be used to fully protect these objects from direct bombings, it was nonetheless possible to at least reduce the ever more frequent damage caused by nearby explosions. After an initial protective layer of paper or cloth used to prevent surface scratches, these works of art that could not be moved were protected behind a barrier of sand bags held in place by scaffolding, and, also, often, by a wall made of bricks.....This technique of protecting art objects in their actual position was usedfor the sculptures of the Loggia dei Lanzi in Piazza della Signoria The Lion is in the Loggia dei Lanzi, so was protected as described above and as shown on page 4" ([Original PDF](#)) ([PDF saved on this website](#))

THE LOCATION

Aerial view of the city of Florence, with the Duomo. ([Photo from "Saving Italy" by robert M. Edsel](#))

Piazza della Signoria, Florence, Italy. ([Photo in 1940](#)) ([Photo today](#)) ([Link to history](#))

Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence, Italy. ([Photo in 1937–festival of flowers](#)) (Link to article about shell landing on roof) ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

Ponte Vecchio, Florence, Italy. ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

Vasari Corridor, Florence, Italy. ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

Boboli Gardens, Florence, Italy. ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

Interesting history found by Peter Bae at Princeton: "Also the book on Firenze in 44 and 45 has some interesting info.(but not specifics). For example, before 44 many Italian believed that the U.S. would not bomb Firenze because of its historic monuments so actually people from countryside came to the city to escape from bombing."

PROTECTING MICHELANGELO'S "DAVID"

In process of bricking over the DAVID. ([Photo](#))

Expert Ilaria Dagnini Brey: "Saving Italy's Art during the War" ([Link](#)) ([Article with photos](#))

Italians bricked over David. ([Photo](#))

"In 1942, Florentine officials, concerned about Allied bombing, entombed Michelangelo's sculpture *David*, and his other works, known as *The Slaves*, in brick." (From "Saving Italy" by Robert M. Edsel - Across from page 327, in list of photos.)

ITALIANS PROTECTING JEWISH FAMILIES Hugh O'Flaherty. ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

In Elizabeth Bettina's book, *It Happened in Italy*, there are numerous accounts of Italians treating foreign and Italian Jews with respect. For example, Jews did not have to wear a star on their sleeve, could choose what towns to live in, and though they couldn't work or own a business, they were given the same rations as the rest of the population. The Italians falsified identification papers to hide the Jews, and generally did not turn anyone in they way other European countries did. Prior to September 8, 1943, Jews in Italy did not fear for their safety. Once Italy joined the Allies, German occupation in the north made life much more dangerous for everyone. Germans deported as many Jews as they could find to concentration camps outside Italy. (Summary by me, Barbara DiLorenzo)

1. Unlike the rest of Europe, Italy was the only country that allowed Jews to enter without a visa. (Bettina 31)

2. For Jews that were detained in Italy, it was a far different experience than anywhere else in Europe. "After the Wolffs were reunited in Ferramonti, [an Italian

internment camp] they had the opportunity to be transferred to their choice of one of several towns. This was called *internato libero*, or internment that was free, meaning they could live in a town amongst the Italians. They only had to stay in the town, sign in at the police office daily, and seek permission from the *carabinieri*, the police, if they wanted to leave for the day. Walter and his family received a list of various approved places to live and—because it had an active Jewish community and a beautiful synagogue—they chose a small town in northern Italy called Casale Monferrato, near Torino and Milano." (Bettina 35)

"During my time in Campagna, we were treated well, we were able to mix with the people of the town, walk around, play soccer, and I helped the people with medical questions, as did the other doctors in the camp." This is a direct quote from Dr. Kleinman, a Jewish internee at Campagna. (Bettina 210)

3. Prior to September 8th, 1943, Jews did not fear for their lives in Italy. It was after Italy switched sides to join forces with the Allies, that German occupation became dangerous for them. At this point, Germans actively searched for Jewish internees to deport them to Germany. (Bettina 184)

"Did you ever feel you were in any danger while you were in Civitella del Tronto?" [Elizabeth Bettina] asked. "No. Not in the beginning. It's difficult to comprehend that during the time Mussolini controlled Italy, I felt safe and lived as normal a life as I could, given the circumstances," he said. "There was a war going on, and times were difficult for everyone in Italy, not just the Jews. We had what they had, the same rations. Before September 8, 1943, we were safe. After that it changed." (Bettina 99)

"After September 8, 1943, when the Germans began marching through Italy, living in Milano was too dangerous. The family became one of the many *sfollati*, Catholic and Jewish people who fled the cities all over Italy..." (Bettina 133)

4. Italians helped ensure the safety of Jews in Italy by: 1. Providing false identification papers (Bettina 36) 2. Helping them hide (Bettina 99) 3. Not enforcing the Nazi rules, or making them wear the Star of David on their arms. (Bettina)

"Walter [Wolff] continued, 'It's important for people to know what happened in Italy. We've been surprised that the Italians do not know what happened in their own backyard. If it were not for the many 'Giovanni Palatuccis' of Italy, who chose to listen to their own hearts instead of following orders of people who were crazy... well, none of us would have survived, and I have many friends who survived because they were in Italy. If we had remained in Germany, we probably would not have lived.'" (Bettina 76)

5. There was one and only one boat from Naples to New York, which left in July 1944. This was the *Henry Gibbons*, and 982 Jewish refugees were taken to a base in Oswego, New York by executive order from Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (Bettina 196-198)

WAR IN FLORENCE

Effect of war on the city of Florence. ([Link to article in Italian](#))

Protecting as much art as possible after armistice in 1943. ([Link to article in Italian](#))

"During World War II the city experienced a year-long German occupation (1943–1944) and was declared an open city. The Allied soldiers who died driving the Germans from Tuscany are buried in cemeteries outside the city (Americans about nine kilometres (5.6 miles) south of the city, British and Commonwealth soldiers a few kilometres east of the centre on the right bank of the Arno). In 1944, the retreating Germans blew up the bridges along the Arno linking the district of Oltrarno to the rest of the city, making it difficult for the British troops to cross. However, at the last moment Charle Steinhauslin, at the time consulate of 26 countries in Florence, convinced the German general in Italy that the Ponte Vecchio was not to be blown up due to its historical value." - Wikipedia (Online source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence>)

THE BOAT

The real "USAT Henry Gibbins." ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

Underway in heavy seas around 1956. ([Photo](#))

Ship newspaper in 1953. Fascinating details from the time. ([PDF](#))

No other civilians traveled by large boat at this time: Adriatica sailed through the year 1939, but stopped until 1949. Italian lines sailed to the US through 1940, and started in again 1948.

THE JOURNEY – NAPLES TO NEW YORK

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive order for "Safe Haven." ([Link to history](#))

Ruth Gruber was the American who guided them across. ([Photo](#)) ([Link to history](#))

([Article by Times of Israel](#))

Refugees were mostly Jewish, but about 100 were not. ([Link to NYTimes article](#))

Excerpt of the experience from "Haven" by Ruth Gruber. ([Link](#)) **1. Were any of following names, those of children? (Taken from the list of refugees brought to Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York on the USNS Henry Gibbins.) Were they all girls, or could one of the Renate's be a boy? ([Link that says Renate is unisex](#))**

Renata Albrecht

Renate Guttman

Renate Reisner

Renata Rothschild (Found on <http://www.safehavenmuseum.com/story/refugee/>)

FORT ONTARIO, OSWEGO NY

Safe Haven Museum and Education Center. ([link](#))

List of refugees, including 2 Renatas and 2 Renates. ([link](#))

"The final tally from the ship's log of 983 refugees included Jews from 18 countries and 108 Roman Catholics, Protestants and Russian and Greek Orthodox.

Listed upon their arrival in New York as "U.S. Army casual baggage," each had to sign papers promising to return to Europe when the war was over. Fewer than 100 actually did." <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/21/nyregion/59-years-ago-they-fled-to-an-internment-camp.html>

THE RETURN OF THE ART

Return of artwork to Florence, Italy. ([Photo from July 22, 1945](#))

Robert M. Edsel's Blog. ([Link to website](#))

Monuments Men. ([Link to website](#))

CLOTHING AND DETAILS OF THE TIMEPERIOD - ITALY

Photo of kids from the journey of USNS Henry Gibbins. ([Photo](#))

Refugees at Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York. ([Photo](#))

Photos from Pennoyer online. ([Link to photos](#))

CLOTHING AND DETAILS OF THE TIMEPERIOD - USA Clothing. ([Link to history](#))

Norman Rockwell Saturday Evening Post Covers in the 1940's. ([Link to website](#))

Vintage clothing ads. ([Link to photos](#))

1940's ad for boots, with illustration of children. ([Photo](#))

Striped shirt on child, with shoes. ([Photo](#))

Entire family in striped shirts. ([Photo](#))