GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI  
(JULY 4, 1807 - JUNE 2, 1882)

General Giuseppe Garibaldi was one of the greatest Italian patriots of all time and definitely the most famous soldier of the Risorgimento. He personally led many of the crucial military campaigns that brought about the formation of a unified Italy in 1861. He is called the “Hero of the Two Worlds,” a tribute to his military expeditions in South America and throughout Europe.

Garibaldi was born in the Italian Provincial city of Nice in 1807. His family was involved in coastal trade and he was certified as a Merchant Marine captain in 1832. He met and married Anna Maria Ribeiro da Silva, an impassioned proponent of Italian unification through political and social reforms, in Geneva in 1833, and joined the Young Italy movement as well as the Carbonari revolutionary association. He participated in a failed Mazzinian revolt in Piedmont, was sentenced to death, and consequently fled to Marseilles.

He made his way to Brazil where he met Anna Maria Ribeiro da Silva, affectionately known as Anita, a woman of Portuguese and American-Indian descent. She became his lover, companion in arms, and eventually his wife. Garibaldi fought alongside other Italian exiles on behalf of the Uruguayan government, who opposed the Argentinean dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Calling on the Italians of Montevideo, Garibaldi formed the Italian Legion in 1843. Their black flag represented Italy in mourning for the loss of its independence. Garibaldi on horseback, circa 1860

Local rebels joined Garibaldi’s army and they were able to defeat a three-thousand-strong, Bourbon French garrison at Calafatimi on May 13. Garibaldi then advanced to Palermo, Sicily’s capital, and launched a siege on May 27. He won a signal victory and gained worldwide fame and the respect of many Italians.

Having accomplished the conquest of Sicily, Garibaldi and his men crossed the Strait of Messina, avoiding the Neapolitan fleet, and entered Naples on September 7. After an extensive battle on the Volturino River, Bourbon King, Francis II, retired and Garibaldi captured Naples, the largest town in Southern Italy. He then declared himself the Dictator of the Two Sicilies. However, during his famous meeting with Victor Emmanuel II at Teano on October 26, 1860, Garibaldi greeted him as king of the newly unified nation of southern Italy. Victor Emmanuel II played a crucial role in unifying and freeing the North.

In 1862, French Emperor, Napoleon III, guaranteed the independence of Rome from Italy by stationing a French garrison in Rome. Victor Emmanuel II was weary of the international repercussions of attacking the Papal States and discouraged his subjects from participating in this revolutionary venture. However, Garibaldi did not comply with his wishes.

He sailed from Genoa to Palermo in June of 1862, seeking to gather volunteers under the slogan, “Roma o Morte,” or “Rome or Death.” Garibaldi quickly formed an enthusiastic army and left for Messina. When his force of two thousand men arrived, the army proved loyal to the king’s instructions and barred their passage onto the mainland. Garibaldi and his men then turned south and set sail from Catania, where Garibaldi declared that he would enter Rome as a victor or perish beneath its walls. He landed at Melito on August 14 and marched into the Calabrian Mountains.

The Italian government was quite
Garibaldi spent the rest of his life in Caprera with his third wife, Francesca Armosino, and their children and family members. He died on June 2, 1882.

There is no question that Garibaldi’s popularity, skill, heroism and military exploits made the unification of Italy possible. He served as a global example of 19th century revolutionary nationalism and liberalism. An active freemason, Garibaldi thought of masonry as a network to unite progressive men as brothers both within nations and as members of a global community. Garibaldi wrote at least two novels during his lifetime, including Clelia and Cantoni il volontario. 1870. He also wrote two non-fiction works, Autobiography, published in 1889, and The Memoirs of Garibaldi, co-authored by Alexandre Dumas, published in 1861. Five Italian Navy ships have been named after him, including the current flagship, the aircraft carrier Giuseppe Garibaldi.

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The Garibaldi-Meucci Museum

History and Goals

The mission of the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum is to collect, preserve and exhibit material relating to the lives of Giuseppe Garibaldi and Antonio Meucci and to the role of Italian-Americans in the United States; to publish and disseminate information regarding the museum and the Italian-American heritage; to conduct cultural, artistic and educational programs and classes to promote the understanding of Italian-American heritage; to sponsor and conduct programs and activities designed to eliminate ethnic and racial prejudice and discrimination; to collect, hold, own, maintain, preserve and make available appropriate historical objects and artifacts; and to conduct all lawful activities which may be useful in accomplishing the foregoing purposes.

The Museum is administered by the Order Sons of Italy in America, the oldest organization of Italian-American men and women in the United States.

The Garibaldi-Meucci Museum

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Giuseppe Garibaldi

when the Franco-Prussian War broke out in 1870, many Italians favored the Prussians and signed up as volunteers at the Prussian embassy in Florence. After the French garrison was recalled from Rome, the Italian army captured the Papal States without Garibaldi’s assistance. For the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire, Italy was unified from the Alps to Sicily. Rome became the capital city of the unified country of Italy. However, in light of recent hostility shown to him by Napoleon III, Garibaldi turned his support to the French Third Republic, traveled to France, and assumed command of an army of volunteers in the Vosges Mountains. They were never defeated by the Germans.

Garibaldi took up arms again in 1866, this time with the full support of the Italian government. The Austro-Prussian War had broken out and Italy allied with Prussia against Austria-Hungary in hopes of taking Venetia from Austrian rule. (Third Italian War of Independence). Garibaldi gathered his Hunters of the Alps once again, now almost 40,000 strong, and led them into the Trentino. They defeated the Austrians at Bezzecca and continued towards Trento. However, Italian regular forces were quickly defeated at the Sea battle of Lissa. An armistice was signed, in which Austria ceded Venetia to Italy, but this was largely due to Prussia’s successes on the Northern Front. Garibaldi was ordered to stop his advance to Trento and he answered with a short telegram that read, “Obbedisco,” “I obey.” After the war, Garibaldi led a political party that agitated for the capture of Rome. In 1867, he marched on Rome once again but was matched with a strong Papal army supported by a French auxiliary force. Garibaldi was defeated, taken prisoner and held captive for some time. He eventually returned to Caprera.

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