

CHESTER TIMES – January 23, 1922 – DEDICATION OF NEW ORPHANAGE AT CONCORDVILLE –
Unveiling of a Bust of Dante, the Poet, Also a Feature

Another exemplification of the enormity of America's good will and the omnipresent desire of her people to make more solid their bonds of friendship with Italy was exhibited yesterday at the unveiling of a bust of Dante Alighieri and the dedication of the orphanage of the Sons of Italy of Pennsylvania at Concordville.

It was during the banquet that followed that His Excellency Rolandi Ricci, Italian Ambassador to the United States, proclaimed his intention of sending to King Victor Emanuel a cable telling his highness of the strength of the friendship between the two nations and of the forging of another link in the strong chain.

More than 2000 people, mostly citizens of Italian birth, witnessed the ceremonies and heard Dante Alighieri, Italy's greatest and immortal poet, eulogized.

Ambassador Ricci and some of the highest officials, as well as most learned men of the State and county, received praise for their aid and the good will be shown.

The ceremonies began directly following the arrival of the ambassador and his staff and a special train bringing the guests of the occasion. The bust of Dante, erected in front of the home, was first unveiled.

This was the principal feature of the ceremonies. The work is that of Onorio Rubtolo, celebrated Italian-American sculptor of New York City. The bust, of bronze, is mounted on a base of Tennessee marble and is a replica of the Ruotolo bust of Dante which is shortly to be placed in the Public Library, New York City. The artist is also the sculptor of the bust of Enrico Caruso which was recently placed in the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York City, a gift of the Italian tenor's widow.

The first speaker was A. Giuseppe Di Silvestro, grand master of the Order of the Sons of Italy of Pennsylvania. He outlined the work that has been done by the order within the past five years and told of the self-denial of the 30,000 members that the orphanage might be established. He spoke of Dante, his accomplishments and the spirit they have instilled in the Italian people, and expressed the hope that the teachings of this great poet would be taught the future inmates of the institution that they might exemplify him.

Ambassador Ricci congratulated Chevalier DiSilvestro on the work that the order has accomplished, pointing out the patriotic course it will teach and how it will assist in making desirable citizens of the orphans that are raised there. He expressed his desire of seeing that work of the order repeated elsewhere.

SKETCH OF DANTE – Dr. John L. Haney, principal of the Central High School, Philadelphia, gave a sketch of the life of Dante, telling of the latter's first meeting with Beatrice and how she inspired him to write his immortal "Inferno," his greatest work. He told how he was exiled in 1302 for his political activity and of his death 19 years later.

The significance of his great works and his impression upon the people of today is shown, said Dr. Haney, by the fact that last year the people throughout the world celebrated his six hundredth anniversary.

After the bust had been unveiled there was an inspection of the orphanage followed by the dinner in the gymnasium. More than 1000 were seated in the hall and heard the addresses of the evening. Chevalier DiSilvestro was toastmaster and introduced the speakers in their turn.

Judge Eugene C. Bonniwell of Philadelphia told of his pride at being able to attend the celebration. He said that the work of the order – the establishing of orphanages – shows the highest type of civilization and is a duplication of Jesus Christ's treatment of the sick, the lame and the halt, not only in the dedication of the bust of Dante but in the establishment of a home here in America for the orphans of their race.

“The glory is in giving, not taking,” said Judge Bonniwell. “I wish to God Pennsylvania had more chevaliers A. Joseph DiSilvestro. I am more than proud of your grand master.”

He also paid tribute to Italy’s hero of the Pilave, General Diaz, and others of her legion of heroes.

“Your people show their approval of the work by their presence, said Senator Albert Dutton MacDade, another speaker. “We senators, as your representatives, are at Harrisburg to see that you receive your just dues and you can look to your representative from Delaware County for help at any time.”

He also spoke of the future possibilities of the orphans at the home. In closing, he paid highest tribute to Ambassador Ricci. Judge Samuel E. Shull of Monroe County, also praised the work of the Sons of Italy, and complimented the ambassador on being the representative of such a race.

Speaking in Italian, Ambassador Ricci expressed his intention of sending the telegram to his king. He said that the members of the order were worthy of the trust that had been placed in them, and that the institution will be a monument of their integrity and generosity.

Continuing, he expressed his belief that the Italians must feel kindly toward American, not only because of the security and the comfortable homes provided but because of the latter’s appreciation of Italy’s architecture, music and particularly that immortal Italian literature of which Dante’s is the foremost.

He said that the virtues of the Italian people are thrift, love of family, love of country and sacrifice for their children and that the establishment of the orphanage is a reaffirmation of the principles taught in the father land. In closing, he again complimented the work of the Sons of Italy.

Judge Bonniwell, addressing his excellency, offered an addition to the cablegram. He said that as representative of one of the oldest and most patriotic orders in America, the Sons of the American Revolution, he wished to add its compliments.

Ambassador Ricci accepted and thanked Judge Bonniwell. The cable will be sent to the king as first soldier of the country and the first citizen of Italy, from the Italians and Americans who participated in the dedication and subsequent exercises.

VISION OF UNION – Eugene V. Alessandrone, Philadelphia attorney, told of his vision of a more harmonious union between the people of Italy and America. He said that the work of establishing the orphanage is not the work of the wealth of a few but the sacrifice by the workingmen of a few pennies which gradually grew into the fund with which the work was accomplished.

This deed contributes to the welfare of the nation, said Mr. Alessandrone, and later the many orphan children of the Sons of Italy who are raised in the home, will show their devotion to the land of their parents’ adoption.

Dr. Francesco Cubicciotti praised the establishment of the home. He said it is but the beginning of a movement, to build similar ones throughout the United States. He also spoke of the similarity between the ideals of Dante and the work which the order is accomplishing.

Among the other speakers of the day were A. Giuseppe DiSilvestra, grand master of the order; A. Perfilia, grand keeper of records; Baldo Aquilano, past grand keeper of records; Mrs. Dario Tedesco, Mrs. Spinelli, venerable of the order, and F. A. Fravascio.

Among the notables present were Judge Eugene C. Bonniwell, Durell Shuster, secretary to Mayor Moore; Dr. John L. Haney, Judges Patterson and Brown of Philadelphia, and Judge Shull of Monroe County; Chev. L. Stilletti, Italian Counsel at Philadelphia, Chev DiVincenzo, vice consul, Dr. Michael DeVitis, Pittsburgh; James M. Hamilton, Senator and Mrs. MacDade and Chev. Vincenzo Sellaro, founder of the order.

During the evening a relief of Mr. DiSilvestro was presented by Anthony Fileuri. After the presentation, the former made an announcement that the order will send a telegram to the aged mother of the ambassador complimenting her on the merits and ability of her son.

One humorous point of the ceremonies was the presentation to his excellency of a box of lemons, a token in memory of those of the order who opposed the establishing of the orphanage.