

PER TUA  
INFORMAZIONE  
(FOR YOUR INFORMATION)

BY JOE SANO

HAPPY 250TH ANNIVERSARY AMERICA



THE  
ITALIAN-AMERICAN  
WHO HELPED  
WRITE THE  
DECLARATION  
OF INDEPENDENCE



Birthplace of Filippo Mazzei in Poggio a Caiano

**F**ilippo Mazzei was truly one of a kind. Some may say he was a complex man. Some may say he was a dreamer. Many believe he was a patriot. Regardless, he was at one time one of Thomas Jefferson's closest friends - a confidant.

Doctor Mazzei received his medical training in Florence and practiced throughout the then Ottoman Empire. Moving to London in 1755 he became a wine merchant. He saw great new opportunities in the British American colonies so he moved to Virginia in 1773. Upon his arrival he immediately began testing the area soils for wine grape and olive cultivation. He settled in as a neighbor to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate. Given their mutual interest in science, politics, agriculture and liberal principles the two men became good friends.

As tensions increased with British colonial rule, he began his entry into colonial politics and armed defense. He became a local militia man and government official.

Having developed a reputation as an ardent patriot, and with proven connections abroad, Mazzei was recruited as an official agent of Virginia by Jefferson and fellow Virginian founding fathers Patrick Henry and George Mason. It is even said that at one time he proposed the “red and white stripes in our flag” as he shared the “Ugo toscana” crest as a model.



As the conflict dragged on, he was dispatched to Europe in 1779 to secure desperately needed funds and supplies (namely from the Grand Duke of his native Tuscany) and gather military and political intelligence.

He was intercepted at sea by the British and imprisoned for three months but later escaped to France to continue his mission. He spent the next four years traveling through Europe in service to the patriot cause, meeting nobles, merchants, and even John Adams and Benjamin Franklin who had been deployed for similar revolution financing.

Returning in 1783 to the newly formed United States, he became a naturalized citizen and while financially struggling he preserved his close friendships with Jefferson, Madison and Monroe.

His ardent support for the American Revolution was further sealed when he published his four-volume history of the colonies and the revolution. He also translated many of Jefferson's speeches and letters into Italian for his merchant and noble friends. By 1788 he returned to Europe and was appointed the Polish Minister to France. He continued to serve the Polish monarchy until it was dissolved. By 1792 Jefferson settled Mazzei's remaining debt and holdings in America while the two continued their trans-continental correspondence.

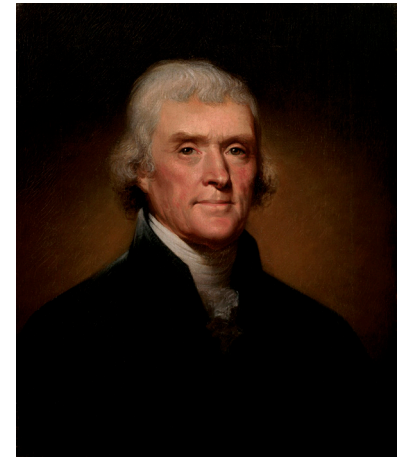
Jefferson's private criticism of the Washington presidency shared with Mazzei somehow became public and that intercontinental link was broken along with the Washington - Jefferson friendship.

Truly there is a large record of the political talk between Mazzei and Jefferson but Mazzei's lasting contribution to the Declaration of Independence was



his commentary used in the 1774 Virginia constitution which Jefferson carried over into the Declaration of Independence.

***Tutti gli uomini sono per natura egualmente liberi e indipendenti. Quest'eguaglianza è necessaria per costituire un governo libero. Bisogna che ognuno sia uguale all'altro nel diritto naturale.***



Thomas Jefferson, the 3rd President of the United States

***All men are by nature equally free and independent. Such equality is necessary in order to create a free government. All men must be equal to each other in natural law.***

Philip Mazzei an Italian American, while forgotten by most, should be remembered as one of the founding philosophers of American democracy.

**HIS WORDS LIVE ON! □**

