



The Reluctant Migrants: Migration from the Veneto to Central Massachusetts 1880-1920

Teresa Fava Thomas

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Most accounts of Italian immigration published in English have dealt with the waves of migration from southern Italy, but very little has been written on those who left northern Italy and their migration patterns. This book explores the factors that drove people who were strongly attached to their home paese (towns) to become global adventurers, as well as what factors drew them to central Massachusetts. Research was completed using American archives and in Italian-language sources in Venice, Treviso, Vittorio Veneto, and Belluno, Italy. At first the Veneti sought seasonal work in Austria and then moved across northern Europe. As conditions worsened, they became increasingly mobile. They used the transport systems to commute to Massachusetts where opportunities in quarries, foundries, and factories attracted seasonal workers. Many emigrants used temporary work to support their families in the mountains from 1880-1900 but it became increasingly difficult. My research shows that there was a complex migration of highly mobile northerners and their mobility began earlier than from the south. Over time large numbers of northern Italians found that Central Massachusetts offered opportunity. Unlike many southerners who settled in New York and Chicago, many northern Italians settled in industrialized smaller towns where they had originally found seasonal work. As one of America's most highly-industrialized regions with a strong demand for unskilled labor, first and second generation European immigrants became 74% of the population; but the influx led to a backlash in the 1920s as anti-Italian hostility intensified during the Sacco and Vanzetti trial.

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