



Period photos of Bartholomew and Filomena Nonella Biaggi, left, and Raymond and Pauline Ghisletta Stornetta.

Genealogy special program at the library

The Swiss-Italian families who established dairy farms along the Mendocino Coast in the late 1800s will be celebrated in a special program of the Mendocino Coast Genealogical Society Tuesday, March 17 from 1:30 to 5 p.m. in the Fort Bragg Library Community Room.

Their descendants, active in area communities, will join members of MCGS to read from local histories and biographies of these pioneer entrepreneurs, among them the Stornetta, Biaggi, Bassi and Nonella families. The usual meeting time has been extended to accommodate participants and guests from Point

Arena, Gualala and farther south.

The public is cordially invited to hear the remarkable stories of these immigrants from the Swiss Canton Ticino who came by steamship to New York and train to California with the help of a Swiss travel agency. Men looking for adventure and girls as young as 13 who had never traveled farther than the next village courageously left their homes and parents to find a new chance to make a living.

Dairy farmers by long tradition, these ambitious young people were handicapped by the limited amount of available farmland in their home country, says family historian Myra

Manfrina of Lompoc, author of "The Swiss-Italians." When they heard of cheap land and the opportunity for dairy farming in California, they came by the thousands. Some of their descendants continue in the dairy and cattle ranching business today, an inspiration to a new generation of young farmers.

A special invitation has been issued to Swiss-Italian families here on the coast by Rena Shafer of MCGS who assembled research contributed by Myra Manfrina and coordinated the free program. Anyone who would like to participate in the presentation should contact Shafer at 964-7675.