



City of Omaha  
Jean Stothert, Mayor  
September 3, 2021

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(Omaha, NE) – The Mayors of Omaha and Carlentini, Sicily will sign a Sister City Friendship Agreement this month, recognizing the century-old connection between the two cities and a history of family, faith, culture, and tradition.

Carlentini is an Italian city in the Province of Syracuse, Sicily; population approximately 17,000.

Over the past year, three Italian heritage organizations in Omaha—the American Italian Heritage Society, the Santa Lucia Festival Committee, and the Orders of the Sons and Daughters of Italy, helped lay the groundwork for this agreement. They formed the Siculo Italia Foundation, a nonprofit whose mission is to bring these two cities together.

“Omaha is proud of our vibrant Italian-American community and the strong ties to Carlentini,” said Mayor Jean Stothert, Honorary Chair of the Omaha Sister Cities Association. “I look forward to expanding and strengthening these important relationships. A Sister City partnership will show us what a small world it really is.”

A friendship agreement provides opportunities for cultural, educational, and business partnerships and exchanges and is an initial step that can lead to a formal sister city agreement.

“To say there is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for this friendship city among the Italian-American community in Omaha would be an understatement,” said Celann LaGreca, a former OSCA president and chair of the OSCA Carlentini Committee. “The collaboration between the people of Carlentini and Omaha has been remarkable, and technology has made this possible due to international travel difficulties this past year because of Covid-19. We are confident that there will be a rich connection between these cities for years to come.”

The Omaha-Carlentini Friendship Agreement virtual signing ceremony will be held September 22 at the Durham Museum, recognizing the historic connection between Carlentini and the Union Pacific Railroad. The first immigrants from Carlentini arrived in Omaha in the early 1900’s, attracted to jobs with the railroad.

Two brothers, Joseph and Sebastiano Salerno, were instrumental in helping settle the immigrants in Omaha.

Sebastiano Salerno recruited Carlentini residents to come to Omaha, Joseph Salerno opened the Bank of Sicily. The Carlentini population led to the development of Omaha’s Little Italy neighborhood with family-owned restaurants, shops, food markets and small businesses.

Today, Italians are the fourth largest ethnic group in Omaha, with more than two-thirds of the population descended from the original Carlentini immigrants.

"Recognition of an official agreement between Omaha and Carlentini is one that is well deserved and will be taken with honor and humility," said Sheri Kanger, co-director of the Siculo Italia Foundation. "This agreement is a symbol for future generations to support the relationship and continue nurturing the strong ties that our ancestors brought to Omaha over a century ago."

The Omaha City Council will consider a resolution to support the Friendship Agreement on September 14.

Omaha has six sister cities: Shizuoka, Japan; Braunschweig, Germany; Siauliai, Lithuania; Naas, Ireland; Xalapa, Mexico; and Yantai, China. In 2019, a Friendship Agreement was signed with Isigny-Omaha Intercom.

For more information about the Omaha Sister City Association, please visit <http://www.omahasistercities.com/>