

## Short History of The *Middletown Bulletin*

The *Middletown Bulletin* on the Connecticut Digital Archives is a story almost a hundred years in the making. It also took two global disasters to make it happen.

In 1923 Cesare Corvo emigrated to the United States of America. He was looking for a better life for his family away from poverty and fascism. Many other family and friends had moved to Middletown Connecticut from Mellili, a small town on the Italian island of Sicily. He established a printing business and was eventually able to bring his wife and children to the United States in 1929.

Max Corvo was one of those children. In 1942 Max enlisted in the Army to fight in WWII. He was anxious to fight fascism and liberate his native country. He also had an idea that the war effort could benefit from on the ground intelligence and the assistance of anti-fascists in the United States with connections in Italy. He had grit and determination and despite starting as a Private in a clerical position he was able to move to intelligence operations and the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor to the CIA. By September of 1942, Max was recruiting fluent Italian speakers from anti-fascists groups in the United States for operations in Italy. He spent the rest of war in covert operations in Europe.

When Max returned to the United States after the war he implemented his idea of the importance of information and contacts with knowledgeable people by starting the *Middletown Bulletin*. Cesare Corvo had started with publications *La Nave* and *Il Bulotino*. The *Bulletin* included articles in Italian from correspondents in Italy. The purpose of the *Bulletin* was to inform the Italian American reader about local, national, and international news. The *Middletown Bulletin* was published from 1947 to 1996. Max's son Bill took over the editorship for the later issues.

Bill Corvo recognized the *Middletown Bulletin* as his family's legacy to the community. He approached the Russell Library to help him with preserving the information in the newspaper and providing access to the public. There were 300 issues and over 4000 individual pages. The Connecticut Digital Archives (CTDA) was the perfect host for this newspaper.

When Covid-19 forced the library to close to the public we had to reassess how to continue to help our community. It was obvious that digital resources were of increased importance for research and access. This was the perfect opportunity to share the *Middletown Bulletin* with the greater Middletown community and local historians.

Working from home provided an opportunity to add the *Middletown Bulletin* to our CTDA collection. The CTDA had developed spreadsheet ingestion and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to streamline the process and make the *Bulletin* searchable. Meanwhile Bill had been in contact with the local history organization, The Middlesex Historical Society, about giving a talk about his family's legacy and re-introducing the *Middletown Bulletin* to the community. On April 22 at 7PM Bill will speak on this topic. Of course it is on Zoom and open to anyone.

Issues from 1967 to 1996 are in process for digitization and inclusion in the CTDA. The library and community partnership is ongoing.