



# The Urban Colonists: Italian American Identity and Pol in Utica NY

*Philip Bean*

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In 1910, nearly half of Italian immigrants in the United States lived in communities with fewer than 100,000 residents. These immigrants often developed surprisingly complex ethnic "colonies" like those that existed in larger cities, and many attained prominence in the political, social, and commercial life of such smaller cities and towns. It is this class of community, often neglected by scholars whose attention is drawn to larger metropolitan areas, that Bean explores in *The Urban Colonists*, a richly detailed history of Italian Americans in Utica, New York. Charting the rise and decline of Utica's "colonia" from the mid-nineteenth century into the late twentieth century, Bean examines the multiple facets of life in this ethnic enclave, including the settlement of new neighborhoods, labor unions and left-wing activists, its lively business community, ethnic and political organizations, the complexity and broader relevance of immigrant religiosity, and powerful "Old World" hometown loyalties. He discusses how an array of factors, including social and political upheaval and discrimination, fostered the rise of Italian nationalism and Italian American identity. The author deftly illustrates how this intensified ethnic identity, the high concentration of Italians in Utica, and a quest for respect and economic security helped to make Italian American leaders important local political power brokers for much of the twentieth century.

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