

A Recipe for Di... scovery

Bianca Soria (April 15, 2014)



In 2006 Nancy Campbell, an artist from Saugerties and currently, in New York state, while on a trip in Italy with her husband, decided to pay a visit to the her grandfather's hometown in the hope to untangle the mystery of his origins.

INGREDIENTS:

An American artist on the tracks of her family history.

A not so well known countryside region, [Ciociaria](#) [2], about 50 miles southwest of Rome, Italy
Surprise ingredient

SERVES: Anyone with a passion for Italy or art, or both

DIRECTIONS: Read through and let us take you on this enticing journey



Nancy Campbell was in fact an orphan, according to legend the illegitimate child of a noblewoman, raised by a family in a village not far from Rome, in the region known as Ciociaria.

By searching through birth and baptismal records in many little towns in Ciociaria, Nancy was hoping to discover some family ties... And she did, only not the ones she was looking for. In fact nothing came up about her grandfather, but in the process she came across a second cousin, and at the time the only one in the crowd to speak English, [Giulio Tirinelli](#) [3], the third ingredient of our recipe for di... scovery.

And like in all the best recipes, when the base ingredients are genuine and complement each other, the end result is a definite success.

Nancy and Giulio developed a friendship and shared the love for this land, "with unspoiled hill towns, slopes covered with olive trees and vineyards". Nancy says: "As a landscape painter, I found the landscape of the mountains beautiful and the villages charming, and was amazed at how few tourists there were."

So in 2011, with the support of the local government, they started the project "Discover Ciociaria".

The first step was the realization of a mural, similar to the one the artist had made in her hometown of Saugerties, with 27 kids from the elementary [School of Piglio](#) [4]. After a walk in the nature, under Nancy's guidance the children, and some excited parents with them, painted a three meters long mural representing the local landscape.

But the beauty that was caught by those curious eyes and put on canvas by those young hands was meant to be shared by many more.

In 2012, with the help of [Stefania Bedetti](#) [5], responsible for the Cultural Affairs department of the Piglio city council, a project symbolizing the friendship of the two countries and celebrating the landscape of Ciociaria and the artists of both regions, Ciociaria, Italy and the [Catskill Mountains](#) [6] of New York State, was begun.

Four Italian and four American painters each were given a small section of a photo featuring the landscape near [Piglio](#) [7] and each was asked to create a painting, 50cm wide x 70cm high. The work from the Americans was brought to Italy by Nancy, to be installed on panels, then joined as one large, 200cm x 140cm polyptic, in Italy.

"Each artist worked independently, bringing to can-vas their unique interpretation of the landscape. In the spirit of a true voyage of discovery, two of the American artists had never visited Ciociaria, yet, with fresh eyes and imagination, were able to convey the beauty of the [Sacco Valley](#) [8]. Each painter brought their individual style to the polyptic, and the end result was a symbolic unity of culture and vision between Italian and American artists who had never met each other, yet celebrated together the beauty of the Italian countryside of Ciociaria."

The polyptic was displayed for six months, travelling to each of the six towns of Ciociaria that took part in the project.

And as the polyptic travelled around the artists followed, welcomed and taken care of by enthusiastic local supporters. The guests were touched by the hospitality, and the people of Piglio generously shared the best they had to offer, 'vino', '[grappa](#) [9]' and typical snacks.

The polyptic is now on the way to the US to be displayed at the Town Hall in Saugerties, while Nancy keeps on offering workshops to Americans and others who want to explore this unknown part of Italy.

In the hunt for old relations Nancy discovered new ones, a home away from home. In a journey where the past insinuates itself into the present, across cultures and continents, moulding a new and peculiar kind of kinship.



The best tribute possible to that grandfather of unknown origins. No details of his past will ever be known, but his life has surely created long-lasting roots, his spirit brought to new life by the strokes of the artists portraying his native landscape.

If you would like a taste of this traditional yet innovative recipe for discovery, you'll find the following links helpful.

2014 workshop's website [>>>](#) [10]

Discovering Ciociaria 2013 [>>>](#) [11]

Enjoy!

Source URL: <http://iitaly.org/magazine/focus/life-people/article/recipe-di-scovery>

Links

- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/piglio-view1397586222jpg>
- [2] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciociaria>
- [3] <http://www.vacaza.com/deligogodetail/354/>
- [4] <http://www.istitutocomprensivopiglio.it/>
- [5] <http://www.comuniecitta.it/amministrazioni-comunali/60053-piglio/93447-stefania-bedetti>
- [6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catskill_Mountains
- [7] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piglio>
- [8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valle_Latina
- [9] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grappa>
- [10] <http://halfmoonartstudio.com/>
- [11] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Grz8V9nDPA>