



Memory Recovered: The Della Seta and Di Segni Family Films (1923)

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Recovered Memory - A special screening of a nine minutes archival film of the Della Seta family. The only known video document of Italian Jewish life before the Holocaust, the Della Seta family films were shot in 1923-24 and feature weddings, leisure time and other daily activities. Italian journalist Claudio Della Seta found the films in his family home and never hoped they could be seen again. Recently he discovered that the National Restoration Institute had the capability to restore and digitalize them. After 91 years the films were brought back to life in all their splendor, wit and tenderness. Courtesy Della Seta - CDEC - Csc-Cineteca di Stato Sunday, January 25 at 2:00 pm Museum of Jewish Heritage 36 Battery Park Place Tickets at www.mjhnyc.org

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are the only known video document of Italian Jewish life before the Holocaust. The Italian journalist Claudio Della Seta found the negatives of films in his family home and never imagined they could be screened again. Recently he discovered that the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia and the Istituto per il restauro e la conservazione del patrimonio archivistico e librario had the capability to restore and digitize them. After 91 years the films were brought back to life in all their splendor, wit and tenderness. Courtesy Della Seta Family - Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation, Milan - Csc-Cineteca di Stato, Rome.

The films' author

Salvatore Di Segni was born in Rome on January 9th, 1879, nine years after the abolition of the ghetto and the city's annexation to unified Italy. His father, Amadio Di Segni, had taken part in the Risorgimento and in the carbonari movement. For this reason he had spent time in jail. Immediately before or after the First World War, he moved to Milan where he opened several textile and clothing companies with a Swiss partner, Jack Brausnweich. After the Racial Laws of 1938 he took refuge in Switzerland. He died in Lugano in 1945 upon learning that his sister Giulia had been murdered in Auschwitz. After the war, his wife Ada Volterra joined their children in Argentina.

Dating the films

All footage was shot in 35mm Gevaert film, probably between winter and fall 1923. Only two segments can be dated exactly. One, shot at the beach, is dated September 1st 1923 as revealed by the newspaper's headlines "Italian Troops Land in Corfu". The other, memorializing a family wedding, is dated October 14th, 1923.

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Family Films (1923)

Places

The beach is thought to be at Anzio, a small town South of Rome. The location of the pine-tree woods is unknown. The wedding took place in Perugia. The mountain is probably near Aprica.

Protagonists

In the film at the beach some members of the Di Segni family can be identified: Franco (13) wears a white shirt and circles around his mother, Ada (sitting on the left, in a white dress). Franco's sister Ester (14) sits next to their mother. The girl playing on the side with another boy is probably Luciana, Franco's and Ester's younger sister. Franco, Ester and Luciana can also be seen in another films at the beach and in the woods. The lady on the right, who reads the newspaper and wears a darker dress, is Clelia Volterra, Ada's sister.

The third film was shot during the wedding of Silvio Della Seta and Jole Campagnano. Among the guests are Silvio's sisters, Margherita and Elena, and his parents, Samuele (Lello) Della Seta e

Giulia Di Segni. Samuele is the heavier man with a hat, umbrella and cigarette. Giulia wears a

feathered hat and enters the film from the left, in the first scene. Next to them are Jole Campagnano's parents, Giuseppe (Peppe) Campagnano, the tall man wearing a coat, and Italia Di Segni; Tullio Della Seta, the child in sailor's outfit; Elena Della Seta, the girl with braids; Galliano Servadio, a family friend, is the thin man in rain coat with his wife Maria. Samuele and Giulia were arrested in Rome on October 16th, 1943 and killed in Auschwitz upon arrival.



Music for the films is drawn from a collection of 78 shellac records that belonged to Giuseppe Campagnano, the bride's father, and are now at the State Discotheque in Rome.

Original reels and restoration

All original 35mm reels were deposited in entrusted to the Center for Contemporary Jewish

Documentation

in Milan. Restoration and digitization were conducted by the Istituto per il restauro e la conservazione del patrimonio archivistico e librario (IRCPAL) and the Centro sperimentale di Cinematografia - Cineteca di Stato.

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