

## Basin's Camelia-Colombo Lodge rich in history.



1960 Grand Lodge of California 25th Silver Convention held in Klamath Falls, OR

By RYAN PFEIL

H&N Staff Writer - Herald and News  
heraldandnews.com

Wednesday, September 30, 2009 7:07 PM PDT

Yolanda Rosterolla and Richard Pastega, board members of Klamath Falls Camelia-Colombo Lodge, No. 1294, remember the Grand Lodge of California's 25th Silver Convention at the Klamath Falls Armory as a grand affair.

The 1960 four-day event, hosted by the Camelia-Colombo Lodge, drew thousands of California residents from Los Angeles and San Francisco to the Basin area.

"They filled the Armory," Pastega said.

The lodge, a cultural meeting place for Klamath Italian-Americans since its opening in 1924, still maintains a presence in Klamath Falls through community outreach and education. The oldest Sons of Italy lodge in Oregon, it was a home to a booming population of Italian-American families flocking to the region, many of who still live in the area today.

### Background

The Lodge's opening 85 years ago coincided with the largest influx of Italian-Americans in U.S. history., Pastega said.

Between 1900 and 1930, more than 20 million people immigrated to the U.S. to become American citizens. The original Sons of Italy Lodge opened in New York City in 1905 to help ease their transition into an unfamiliar country. Lodge officials taught English classes and offered other resources to help new immigrants attain citizenship.

"It was to help these immigrants survive in this country," Pastega said.

The Klamath Falls Lodge, originally called the Sons of Italy Lodge Cristoforo Colombo, started as a men's only lodge on July 22, 1924. They held their meetings in the parish hall at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Klamath Falls.

Like its New York City predecessor, the Camelia-Colombo Lodge taught English classes and sometimes helped families get into affordable homes. These services happened just in time, as the Klamath Basin's population number was climbing, going from about 4,000 residents to nearly 16,000, many of whom were Italian. They had a rich presence in Chiloquin, Algoma, and Modoc Point, and was the fastest growing population in Oregon, Pastega said.