

MEDIA RELEASE August 08

An Old Italian Turns 150.



150th Commemorative Logo

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The Old Macaroni Factory, Australia's oldest Italian building, will celebrate its 150th birthday next year with 12 months of exciting celebrations in the vibrant village of Hepburn Springs, just down the road from Daylesford, an area hailed as the spa capital of Australia and home to most of the country's naturally occurring mineral springs.

The celebrations will focus on bringing the families of original settlers back to the picturesque village, once known as Spring Creek, along with history lovers and the curious, to reflect and celebrate on the gold prospecting that brought so many Swiss and Italians to the region, the finding of mineral water, the establishment of the first macaroni producing factory in country Australia and the wonderfully vibrant village that is Hepburn Springs today.

Highlights at the historic Old Macaroni Factory, will include three days of celebrations during the first weekend of March that will include a **"Back to Spring Creek Descendants Dinner"**, entertainment in the form of a **"Night on the Goldfields"** and the outdoor area being transformed into an **Italian Piazza** during the Saturday and Sunday.

Unlike many of the country's historic buildings, the Old Macaroni Factory is still in the hands of a direct descendant of those who built it: in this case Maria Viola, a descendant of Giacomo, one of the Lucini brothers. Fourth generation Maria and her son Matt now welcome visitors into the Lucini home every weekend and invite them to share some of the magic they have inherited.

Maria runs tours of the historic building and serves rustic dishes from family recipes at the pasta café she has called **Lucini's** after the family. Her Lucini sausages are made from a recipe older than the building, as are sauces developed lovingly by generations of family women from Northern Italy.

Other festivities will include participation in the annual **Swiss Italian Festa** in April, celebration of **Italian National Day** in June, a **Comedy Festa** in September to celebrate the birthday of ancestor Cosmo Lucini and a **Geranium and Herb Festa** as part of the annual Fabulous Flower Festa in November.

Details can be found on the website www.macaronifactory.com.au

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

BACK TO SPRING CREEK - Opening Weekend of events – 27 & 28 February and 1 March 2009

Celebrations start on the **last weekend of February 2009** with a reunion dinner at Lucini's on the Friday night (27 February). The "**Back to Spring Creek Descendants Dinner**" will reunite descendants and friends of the early Italian-speaking settlers from Switzerland and Italy in a celebration of remembrance and friendship.

During the weekend visitors will be able to gather during the day for "**Daytime in the Piazza**" (Sat 28 Feb & Sun 1 March) and celebrate Italian customs and traditions. Food and wine will include barbecued Lucini sausages, pizza slices and Italian style wines from Victorian vineyards. Join a descendant for an Italian card game or a song, play a game of Bocce or make an interesting purchase from a handcraft or plant stall. A "**Night on the Goldfields**" on the Saturday (28 March) will start at dusk for an evening under the stars! With narration, story telling, music and singing, the program will salute the many nationalities that came to the goldfields in search of a fortune.

SWISS ITALIAN FESTA

April-May 2009

This significant local Festa celebrates the Swiss and Italian history and cultural heritage of the region. Our "Little Corner of Italy" weekend includes special dinners and weekend festivities in the piazza.

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Early June 2009

The program for Italian National Day is still in the planning stages but will involve visitors and locals in community celebrations and exhibitions at Hepburn Springs and Daylesford venues. One of the highlights will be a talk by Laura Mecca on the contribution to the region by Italian settlers.

HEPBURN COMEDY FESTIVAL

Sat 19 and Sun 20 September 2009

The highlight of this weekend will be the '**King of Hepburn**' Dinner and live comic entertainment at Lucini's to celebrate Cosmo Lucini's birthday and **Nonna's Birthday Family Lunch** with some great surprises. Other Hepburn Springs' venues will host complementary events and accommodation packages will be available for those wishing to make a complete weekend of it.

GERANIUM AND HERB FESTA

14 & 15 November 2009

Coinciding with Daylesford's Fabulous Flower Festa, each November the Old Macaroni Factory's abundant geranium and herb gardens will be the centre of a fun program on the property. Plans include geranium 'swap meets', demonstrations, special guests, garden parties and music!

More information can be found on the website: www.macaronifactory.com.au

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The original owners of the ‘Old Italian’, Lucini brothers Pietro and Giacomo, came from Intra on Lake Maggiore, high in the Italian Alps and close to the Swiss border.

Educated fabric merchants, they had fought with Giuseppe Mazzini as “Amici di Italia” in Mazzini’s attempt to unite Italy’s many states and kingdoms into an Italian republic and rid them of a variety of invaders and oppression.

After Mazzini’s defeats in Mantua and Milan, the brothers found themselves political refugees with few places to go. News of gold discovered in Victoria led Pietro to Melbourne where he arrived in 1854.

Pietro had no trouble establishing a business selling fabrics but with supplies difficult to come by, he turned his entrepreneurial skills to opening Australia’s first macaroni business. Unfortunately there were few Italians in Melbourne and "Colonial" Australians didn’t eat macaroni!

So Pietro joined the thousands of prospectors heading for the Goldfields of western Victoria and arrived in Spring Creek in 1855. He staked a claim and opened a bakery. Discovering thousands of Swiss and Italians amongst the miners, he quickly converted the bakery to the making of macaroni. Later in 1855 his gold mine in Doctor’s Gully was successful and provided a lucrative source of income for many years.

In 1859 Giacomo Lucini, accompanied by his wife Rosa, arrived to join his brother. Rosa was not happy with the choice of a cramped miner’s cottage for her family so the brothers set about to build a bigger place that would accommodate the factory as well as living quarters for Pietro and Giacomo’s growing family. Using local stone and hand made bricks, along with glass and other materials brought up by bullock dray from Melbourne, the two-storey Macaroni Factory was born.

The brothers did not forget their heritage. In support of Mazzini and his ideals, Pietro gathered about him other Italian patriots who had settled in the area and established the Hepburn Democratic Club. Meanwhile Giacomo painted frescoes on the walls and ceiling of the new home. These scenes from Lake Maggiore and the countryside painted from 1862 to 1864 were daily reminders of the land they had left behind.

The Swiss and Italians in the community had discovered the local mineral water and not only did the brothers use it for their pasta, but Pietro was one of a group of locals who persuaded the Government that the area should be set aside as public land. That Mineral Springs Reserve, now home to the iconic Bathhouse and Spa, the Pavilion and numerous mineral springs that can be enjoyed by the public is testament to their foresight.

The brothers lived to see the Austrians depart and Italy united and The Old Macaroni Factory become a symbol of home for the many Swiss and Italians who settled in the village that is now Hepburn Springs.

Fast forward to 1990 and Maria Viola, a fourth generation Lucini, granddaughter of Giacomo’s daughter Maria, inherited the property from her father Joseph.

[After the 1941 death of Cosmo Lucini, Giacomo’s eldest son, Cosmo’s daughter Rosa turned the grounds into a caravan park and leased the lower rooms of the “Factory” as a bed and breakfast venue. Then, during the 1960s Rosa closed the Park and lived there until she died in 1970. Joseph, her first cousin, inherited the property and when he died in 1990, he left it to his daughter Maria.]

By 1990, derelict with rotting floors and blackberries growing in and around it, the building was in need of a lot more than TLC. Maria was not in a financial position to do even minor renovations. Passionate about the old Lucini home and, with the support of her family, she decided to explore avenues to restore the building and once again hear laughter within its walls.

With the help of Heritage Victoria, Daylesford and District Historical Society, Rotary, Victorian’s Regional Tourism program and Cultural Heritage Projects, research was undertaken, funds raised, conservators consulted and the building was slowly restored over 14 years to become an historic museum and pasta café.

In 2003 the Old Macaroni Factory had more than 15 minutes of fame becoming a film star when chosen as the location for Jan Sardi’s film “Love’s Brother”. A new Bocce court was built for the film and once again the popular Italian game could be played in the grounds of the building.

To provide an income, Maria started conducting tours of the building and in 2003 opened Lucini’s Pasta Café, bringing back to the kitchen the family recipes that had been cooked and served in the same rooms over a century before. Recipes for pasta sauces and the family sausage became menu items for visitors to enjoy as they had been in the 1860s.

During dinners on weekends Maria and her son Matt play host to locals and visitors, share stories about the Lucini family and the early days of Hepburn Springs. When the mood is right, diners join in singing or dancing as the family once did under Giacomo’s frescoes, now restored for all to enjoy.

Home, macaroni factory, political club, film location, reunion centre, café and bar, museum, entertainment venue, scene of Bocce tournaments and card games and Festa centrepiece, the Old Macaroni Factory has been many things to many people in its 150 years.

The building is now on the National Estate Listing, registered by Heritage Victoria and classified by the National Trust.

In 2008 and on the eve of its 150th anniversary, The Old Macaroni Factory is once again a home and business for the Lucini family. Giacomo’s youngest descendants Maddy and Bella play in the garden while Nonna Maria and son Matt prepare to welcome guests to Lucini’s. The building continues to be an integral part of the fabric of Hepburn Springs and a major icon of the Daylesford-Hepburn Springs visitor experience.