

Giovani Locascio and Calogera Virzi Locascio



Giovanni (John) Locascio and Calogera (Caroline Virzi) were both born in the Italian province of Sicily (near Palermo) now known as Piana degli Albanesi. Giovanni's mother was Domenica DiCarlo. Calogeras' mother was Giuseppa Lo Greco

When our ancestors were born, their town was known as Piana dei Greci. Our Locascio family history begins with their marriage and travels to the USA. We now have documented records from the Commune Di Piana Degli Albanesi on their births and the births of their children, Lucia, Vincenzo, Giuseppa, Vito, Michele, Francesco and Serafino Locascio.

The Locascio family came to the United States to start a new life. We do not know the specific reasons they came to America. The family did not keep any journal or written records. They did not all arrive here at the same time. We do not know the details of their travels here. We do not know the conditions of their journey across the Atlantic. As the result of extensive research, my cousins and I have gathered and compiled this information.

We know that John came to the United States around 1906 with his oldest son Vincenzo. They resided in Louisiana (Tangipahoa Parrish). John was a sharecropper. Calogera, Lucia, Michele, Francesco and Serafino came in September of 1909. Giuseppa and my grandfather, Vito came in October of 1910 due to Giuseppa's illness. The 1910 Federal Census shows most of John's family living in Louisiana. Sometime between 1910 and 1912, the family moved to Rockford, Illinois. They resided at 615 Cedar Street. John made a transition from farmer to factory laborer and was employed by the John S. Barnes Company.

We know that Calogera died around 1912 in Rockford, Illinois. Shortly after her death, Giovanni and the rest of the family moved in with his oldest daughter, Lucy and her husband, John Sugar, who lived at 927 South Winnebago St. John and Lucy had a grocery store at the time on the northwest corner of Kent and Winnebago Streets.

In the year of 1920 John died of pneumonia. Both Calogera and John Locascio are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery here in Rockford, Illinois. Also around 1920 the Locascio first generation siblings were divided between Illinois and California.

Vincent and his wife Mary moved to California. They had no children. Lucy and her husband John Sugar moved to California sometime after 1930's. They had four children: Frances, George, Vincent and Caroline. Josephine and her husband Cosimo Uli also moved to California. This marriage ended early and Josephine never remarried. She had no children. Michele and his wife Anna Calagna also made their home in California. Their children were Caroline and John. Frank moved to the Los Angeles California area after spending several years in the US Marine Corp. His first wife was Anne DeCarlo. They had one daughter Carolyn Locascio Oddo. Frank married a second time to Rose Ann Fiorello. This marriage produced two children, Loretta and John.

The two siblings that stayed in Rockford were my grandfather Vito and his younger brother Sam.

Vito married Frances Scimeca in St. Anthony Church. Vito and Frances, my grandparents, had five daughters. Caroline Locascio Ambruoso, Josephine Locascio Coser, Lucy Locascio Kolliker, Joanne Locascio Smith and Mildred Locascio Davis.

Sam married Josephine Fiorello in St. Anthony Church. They had four sons. John (Joan Swenson), Frank (Ester Arletta Smith), Vincent (Nancy Armato) and Carl Locascio, who never married.

As I look back on being raised in South Rockford, I remember beautiful St. Anthony Church and the school filled with children. I remember the many religious parades up and down Ferguson St. When walking down the streets of our Italian neighborhood you could smell the aroma of the great Italian cooking, especially the sugo. I remember my grandma Frances telling me to go to the cucina to get the Italian cookies. In fact that was one of the customs passed down for us girls, learning how to make Cuccidati. I remember the summer evenings sitting on the porch eating granita. Another joy was the anticipation waiting for the St. Anthony Church carnival or St Ambrogio Club carnival in the summer. The Social Club that my grandpa and his siblings belonged to was the PDG Club also known as the Gheg Gheg Club. The letters stood for Piana dei Greci. It was located on the corner of Winnebago St and Blake St. My grandpa would love to go to this club and visit with his friends who spoke his dialect.

The customs of our ancestors are still in our memories and hearts. Because of this first generation Locascio family, we are able to live the "American Dream".

My special thanks to my second cousin Frank Locascio. He is the first family historian to document our ancestor's life. Several years ago, he compiled the Locascio generation history and put it into a wonderful book. Thanks to Joseph Oddo, grandson of Frank Locascio of California, for the photograph of Giovanni and Calogera that is attached to this biography.

Submitted by: Gloria Kolliker Negus on January 19, 2015 for the Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families Project.