

Emiliano and Maddalena Massetti



In the late 1800's, my grandfather, Domenico Massetti, left the Province of "Le Marche," town of Abetito, in Italy and came to America, where he worked in the coal mines in Union Town, Pennsylvania. He sent money earned to his younger brother, Emedio, to start purchasing land (a small mountain) in Italy to become the Massetti Vineyards and Chestnut Groves.

Before WWI, my father came to work in those same coal mines in Pennsylvania with the same purpose to expand the vineyards back in Italy.

However, WWI got in the way. My father, who was still an Italian citizen, enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was sent to Europe. He fought his way through Verdun, Argonne Forest, Alsace Lorraine and West Flanders. He was wounded at West Flanders on November 1, 1918 and sent to a hospital in England. He then returned to the United States and was discharged at Fort Dix, New Jersey on May 16, 1919. He was awarded the Purple Heart and other medals for his service. My father was granted U.S. citizenship for his war service. Shortly after the war, he returned to Abetito, Italy to work in the vineyards.

On September 8, 1921, he married my mother, Maddalena DeLuca, in Ascoli Piceno, Italy. They had 6 sons born in Italy (twins Fiore and Fiorello died), Domenico (Dominic), Gaetano (Guy) (his twin died), and Antoninio (Tony). I, Silvio (John), was the only child born in the United States.

When Mussolini came to power, my father wanted no part of him, especially when he put my oldest brother in the fascist youth organization. In 1929, my father packed up and brought his family back to America. He came to Rockford because he had a friend living here from his home town in Italy.

My mother arrived in America several months after my father with my three young brothers. Despite not knowing a word of English, she traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, got herself and her sons processed through Ellis Island, found Grand Central Station in New York City and managed to find the right train to Rockford.

Probably the reason my mother was able to handle the long trip successfully with her young boys was that at age 16, her mother died, leaving 5 younger siblings. She became a mother figure to them while their father ran a flour mill near the river running through the mountain at Abetito.

My father made all his sons join the U.S. Navy. Due to his WWI experience, he wanted no part of army life for them. All he remembered were those dirty, filthy trenches filled with who knows what.

In 1969 my father returned to his home town of Abetito. He deeded the vineyards to my mother's nephew, Alesio Bucci. Three years ago, those vineyards, now known as Bucci Vineyards, were advertised in the Chicago Italian American magazine called "*Fra Noi*" on the page called "Vino Veritas."

My father worked at Gunit Industries for about 30 years until retirement. Pictured in the photograph are the following: Emiliano and Maddalena (DeLuca) Massetti with their children from L-R, Antonino (Tony), Gaetano (Guy), Silvio (John) and Dominico (Dominic). circa 1935.

Submitted on August 27, 2014 by John (Silvio) Massetti for the Genealogy Project for Culture and Education Committee of GRIAA "Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families."