

## Pietro Cicero Family



Pietro (Peter) Cicero arrived in New York in early 1914 to live with his two older sisters, who had moved there from Sambuca, Sicily. When the First World War broke out, he was informed by the United States Government that he must either return to Italy or join the American Army. At this point he decided to join the American Army, and was sent to fight in France and Germany. For his service to the United States, he received the Silver Star, the Purple Heart, a commendation signed by President Woodrow Wilson, and his American citizenship.

He later returned to Sambuca and married Maria Parlapiano. They lived there for several years, returning to the United States on January 13, 1927, with their two young sons: 16 month-old Charles, and 2-month-old Joseph. They first settled in New York City, then Pennsylvania, finally settling in Rockford, to join Maria's brothers, Anthony and Ross Parlapiano. They rented an upper apartment in the 1200 block of Montague St., and later opened a grocery store on the first floor of the building. The store continued to grow, and was then moved to the corner of Montague and Winnebago Streets. They then moved to the building on the corner of Loomis and West Streets. In the early 1950s, they purchased the property at 2703 West State Street and moved the store there. Peter and Maria purchased the 2-family apartment building at 1128 West Street, and finally purchased 1622 Montague Street. There Peter enjoyed raising rabbits, and growing a beautiful garden. He often spoke of growing up on a farm in Sambuca, Sicily, where he, at age 7, along with his dog, would be sent out to guard the family sheep at night in the meadow.

Peter and Maria had another son, Salvatore (Sam). Maria raised their sons, and worked many long hours beside Peter in the store. After Charles and Joseph returned from serving in the Second World War, they worked in the store, with their younger brother Sam, who served later in the Korean War.

The grocery store continued on at 2703 West State Street, and later was changed to a hardware store, Handyman's True Value Hardware. Peter "retired" at age 45, but continued to work with his sons at the hardware store every day. The store served as a gathering spot also, when the brothers would cook a lunch in the back of the hardware store, and friends and customers would stop by to join them.

Submitted on September 24, 2016 by Salvatore (Sam) P. Cicero for the Genealogy Project for Culture and Education Committee of GRIAA "Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families".