

## THE FAMILY OF GUISEPPE AND GUISEPPIA STASSI



Guiseppea (Pippina) Provenzano was born on May 23, 1898 in Roccamena, Sicily to Albert and Guiseppa DiGiovanni Provenzano. At the age of sixteen, Pippina departed for the United States from Naples, Campania Italy on the ship, Italia. She traveled with her mother Guiseppa and sisters, Mary, Pauline and Frances. They were to join their father, Albert and sister, Antonia, who had immigrated to the US previously. They left two brothers, Peter and Dominick in Roccamena. They came later. The youngest sibling, Joseph was born in the United States.

Pippina and her family arrived on October 14, 1914 at Ellis Island, New York. They traveled to Rockford, Illinois and within a few days, Pippina went to work at the Nelson Knitting Company.

Guiseppe (Joe) Stassi was born on January 1, 1892, in San Guiseppe Jato, Sicily to Paul and Benedetta Stassi. At the age of eighteen, he left for the United States from Palermo, Sicily on the ship, Liguria. He was accompanied by his sister, Lydia and her husband, Pietro Pipitone. (Lydia and her husband returned to Sicily and never came back.) His parents, sisters, Benedetta and Marianina were left in San Guiseppe and never immigrated.

Guiseppe arrived on May 12, 1910 at the Port of New Orleans, La. He then went on to join a "piazano", Anthony Castanza in Madison, Wisconsin.

Through some introduction or inter-mediate, Joe Stassi and Pippina Provenzano met. They were married in Rockford and took up residence here. Joe soon left for the army during World War I to serve in active combat overseas. He was injured there by mustard gas.

After his return from the war, Joe and Pippina were blessed in their marriage by the birth of six children, Albena, Paul, Josephine, Albert, Annette and Therese. Among their places of residence were Rock Street and the final family home on 531 Indiana Avenue.

Joe was a gunsmith by trade, and also had experience working with works of iron, which was his father's trade in Sicily. Here in Rockford, Joe was a machinist at J.I. Case, Woodward Governor, Free Sewing Machine and Barber Colman, where he worked until his retirement in the 1960's. Even after his retirement, on most days, especially when he went out, our father was dressed in a starched, white shirt, dress pants and highly polished shoes.

On Indiana Avenue where we lived, the neighbors were of many ethnicities - Italians, Poles, Lithuanians, Jewish and African Americans. The mothers learned how to communicate effectively with each other.

In warm weather, in the evening, many of the children gathered under the street light to play "kick the can" or "hide-and-peek".

Sunday afternoons was movie time at the Capital Theater on South Main Street. Our sister, Annette, remembers being there on Sunday, December 7, 1941, when Mr. Sarna interrupted the movie and came on stage. He announced that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Everyone went home.

The families on Indiana Avenue became especially close during the World War II as they all had sons in the service - seventeen sons from that one 500 block of Indiana Avenue. Every day, when it was time for the postman to come, the mothers would come out on their porches hoping to receive a letter from their sons. Out of the seventeen boys who left, all but two (from the same family) returned.

Many children of the Italian immigrants quit high school to help with the family finances. Our parents never asked any of us to do that. They wanted all of their children to graduate from high school. They were very proud of that. It was very important to them.

Our mother was a hard-working, selfless woman of deep faith in God. She and our father had a St. Joseph Altar every year for more than 10 years to fulfill a promise that she had made. She made sure that we were clean and fed. She made school lunches for us and we had a hot meal every night as a family around the table. Her children came first, no matter what.

The first photograph is of my parents wedding, Guiseppe (Joe) and Guiseppa (Pippina) taken on June 16, 1918 and the second photograph was taken on October 20, 1956 at St. Ambrogio Club of my family from left to right is Paul, Josephine (mother), Joseph (father), Annette, Albena, Albert, Therese and Josephine.

Our mother and her generation of Italian mothers will never be duplicated.

Thank you Mamma and Papa.

Submitted on July 15, 2016 by Therese Stassi Linsky for the Genealogy Project for Culture and Education Committee of GRIAA “Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families.”