

Bordonaro - Porrovecchio-Parisi-Balistreri Family History

My name is Carma Bordonaro McClure. I am the daughter of Natale Carl Bordonaro (Born: March 22, 1917 Died: November 23, 1998) and Rose Maria Parisi (Born: January 1, 1918 Died: May 11, 2002). For both my parents, the story is the same. Their parents immigrated to America from Sicily and settled in Rockford in the early 1900s, each bringing a couple of children who were born in Sicily and then each continuing to expand their families in America.

My family immigration story begins with my great grandfather Natale Porrovecchio. He was born in Monreale, Sicily in 1855. Monreale, which means *Royal Mountain of the Norman Kings*, sits on a plateau high above Palermo and the sea. It is best known for its 12th century Norman cathedral Santa Maria la Nuova, the most beautiful Norman church in Sicily and one of the architectural wonders of the Middle Ages. Natale Porrovecchio's last Italian residence, however, was the small town Roccamena in the Sicilian interior in the Palermo Province about 15 miles from town Corleone. At the age of 53 and a widower, Natale Porrovecchio left his only child, my grandmother Costrenza Porrovecchio Bordonaro, to immigrate to America. He arrived on April 4, 1908 at Ellis Island. According to his Passenger Arrival Record, his American destination was a relative Giovanni Porrovecchio in Kansas City, MO. I do not know who Giovanni was or why my great grandfather settled on Rock Street in Rockford rather than in Kansas City.

My paternal grandmother Costrenza Porrovecchio Bordonaro, who was married to Leoluca Bordonaro and whose last Italian address was also Roccamena, followed her father and her husband to America. She was born in Monreale in 1877 (Died: Rockford 1917) and was the daughter of Natale Porrovecchio and Francesca Intravaia. According to her Passenger Arrival Record, Costrenza, age 32, along with her two children Vita, age 11 (Born Roccamena 1898; Died Rockford 1983), and Guiseppe, age 6 (Born Roccaamena 1902; Died Rockford 1974), arrived at Elis Island on July 5, 1910. They then joined her husband, my paternal grandfather, Leoluca Bordonaro at 1211 Rock Street, Rockford, Illinois. She traveled with her relatives Benedetto Porrovecchio, age 27, and Felicia Porrovecchio, age 26, who also went to 1211 Rock Street, in Rockford.

I was not able to determine exactly when Leoluca Bordonaro immigrated to America. Leoluca was born in Corleone, Sicily in 1873. Corleone is a small interior town nestled in the "bread basket" of Sicily in the Palermo Province about 30 miles south of Palermo. Sometime before he married Costrenza Porrovecchio, he moved to Roccamena from Corleone. One curious piece of information that I found in his 1898 marriage record was that his he was the son of Guiseppe Bordonaro who was a widower living in New Orleans at that time. Our family has no knowledge of when Guiseppe Bordonaro immigrated to America or what happened to him. Perhaps then, my family immigration story begins with Guiseppe Bordonaro rather than with Natale Porrovecchio. In any event, it was these old men, both of who were widowers, who lead our way to America.(continued on back page)

After they settled in Rockford, Leoluca Bordonaro and Costrenza Bordonaro Porrovecchio had three more children, Frances (Born Rockford 1913; Died Rockford 1992), Ann (Born Rockford 1915; Died Rockford 1998) and Natale (Born Rockford 1917; Died Rockford 1998). Natale Porrovecchio, Leoluca Bordonaro and Costrenza Porrovecchio Bordonaro all lived their entire American lives on Rock Street in Rockford. Also, their five children, Vita, Guisepppe, Frances, Ann, and Natale lived their entire lives in Rockford.

My mother's parents were Enrico Parisi who was born in Aragona, Sicily in 1875 and Carmela Balistreri who was born in Aragona, Sicily in 1882. Aragona is another small interior town in Sicily in the Agrigento Province. It is located just up the hill about 7 miles from famous city, Agrigento. Some of the best ancient Greek ruins outside of Greece lie in the valley of Agrigento. At the age of seven, Enrico went to work in the sulfur mines of Aragona. Since he did not want the same hard life for his children, he decided to move to the New World. First, he explored South America. When he visited Argentina, he found the people to be mean-spirited so he returned to Sicily. His next trip was to North America where he found work in the strip mines in Ladd, Illinois. He sent for his wife Carmela and their three children, Antonino (Born Aragona 1905; Died Rockford), Gerlando (Born Aragona 1908; Died Rockford), and Christina (Born Aragona 1911; Died Rockford 2010), to join him. For a short time they lived in Ladd, Illinois where they added three children, Dominick (Born Ladd 1914; Died Rockford 1996), Mary (Born Ladd 1916; Died California 2007), and my mother Rose (Born Ladd 1918; Died Rockford 2002), to their family before they moved to Rockford. First, they lived in a house on Kent Street and later moved to a house on Morgan Street. They had two more children, Sarah (Born Rockford 1922) and Peter (Born Rockford 1924).

My parents spent their lives in Rockford as did my mother's brothers, Antonino (Sam) Paris, Guisepppe (Joe) Paris, Dominick Paris, and Peter Paris and her sisters, Christina Parisi Manzullo and Sarah Parisi Alban. Mary Parisi Benico lived in Connecticut and then in California. When they were married in 1940, my parents lived on Morgan Street. In 1950, they moved to a house on Oregon Avenue in the Rolling Green area where my sister Constance Sue and I had a very happy childhood. My father Natale worked for many years for Winnebago Cabinet Company and then for Pierce Packaging Company until he retired. Today, my Aunt Sarah, Uncle Peter and numerous cousins still live in Rockford.

Since my paternal grandfather Leoluca Bordonaro never became a U.S. citizen and my father never denounced his Italian citizenship, I claimed *by right of blood* my Italian citizenship. I am proud to now hold dual American-Italian citizenship. With copies of my civil records residing along side those of my Bordonaro ancestors dating back to around 1700 at the Civil Records Office in Corleone, Sicily, I am forever connected to my Italian family.

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