

Ricotta Family Immigration Story



First Picture: Salvatore, Joseph, Antonio, Marianna (Di Piazza) Ricotta, Luciano Jr. and Vincent

Second Picture: Luciano & Marianna (Di Piazza) Ricotta

Third picture: Anna Di Sparte, Maria Morud, Marianna Ricotta, Rosalie Miceli and Teresa Boriero

This is the story of the Ricotta family, told by Salvatore Ricotta. Following the death of his first wife, Luciano Ricotta married my mother Marianna Di Piazza. Luciano had two children, Antonio (Tony) and Rosalie (Lily) that my mother took in as her own.

In October of 1910, Luciano immigrated to U.S. with his family and established residency in Southern IL. Four more children were born to Luciano and Marianna, Luciano Jr. (Louie), Joseph (Joe), Maria (Mary) and Vincent (Vince). In 1920, Luciano's father, who was in Sicily, became ill and requested that he return to Sicily to care for him and the land and other property he owned. Luciano packed up his family and returned to Sicily. In the years after returning to Sicily, five more children were born, Anna, *Giovanni, Salvatore (Sam), *Angelo and Teresa. In 1924, Luciano's first born son, Tony, who was now an adult, wanted to return to the U.S., but immigration for non-U.S. citizens was closed. Therefore, Tony, who was undocumented, immigrated to Argentina. You see, Argentina and Italy shared the same fascist laws and Argentina's borders were open to Sicilian immigrants. Once in Argentina, Luciano's maternal aunt, Concetta Esposito, petitioned for Tony to come to Rockford, IL.

In 1927, when Louie turned 16 years old, Tony petitioned for him to return to the U.S. Then Joe returned in 1930. Once Louie and Joe left Sicily, Luciano once again dreamed of returning to the U.S. with the hope that the entire family would be reunited. However, he would have to wait 6 years before the Italian government would permit him to immigrate out of Sicily. Finally, in 1936, he was authorized a visa and came to live in Rockford. However, before he could petition for his wife and the rest of his family, he had to establish himself in the U.S. with work and proof that he could support his family.

After Vince turned 16 years old, he and Mary returned to the U.S. This was in 1937. Although Mary was older than 16, she had to wait for Vince to become of age. Since Mary was a single woman at the time, the Italian government would not allow her to travel alone; therefore, she waited for Vince. Please keep in mind that both Mary and Vince were U.S. Citizens.

*Giovanni and Angelo both passed away when they were very young children.

In 1938, two years after he came back to the U.S., Luciano was allowed to file documents to have the rest of the family join him in Rockford. While the family was waiting for the immigration papers, they discovered that the American Consulate had found a flaw. By law, the petition had to be made by an American citizen, either a son or daughter, in this case, my brother Louie. The documents were petitioned for Anna, Teresa, and me but not my mother, Marianna. The documents were returned to Luciano, unapproved. Before the corrections were made and returned to American Consulate in Palermo, Italy entered World War II and all immigration out of Europe was halted for non-U.S. citizens. The rest of the family was stuck in Sicily. Sadly, in 1940, Luciano Ricotta passed away. It was a heart attack, but the family believes that a broken heart caused his death from not having his family reunited in the U.S. The time from then on was a time of pain and suffering for the members of the family remaining in Sicily.

In July of 1943, Vince returned to Sicily while serving in the U.S. Army. While stationed in Palermo, he asked his commanding officer for a permit to come to our hometown of Alia to see his mother, brother and sisters. He was granted permission and a Catholic Chaplain drove him to Alia. Toward the end of the war, after Italy surrendered, Mary and my brothers petitioned to have our mother, Marianna my sisters Anna and Teresa and me to immigrate. The documents filed in 1939 were no longer valid. We asked that we be put on the quota for 1945. In the mean time Anna, thinking she would not be eligible to immigrate got married and planned on remaining in Sicily.

Finally, three years later, in 1948, Marianna was issued a visa to return to the U.S., without her remaining children, Teresa and me. We had to remain in the care of our sister Anna and her husband. Not until six months later were Teresa and I were issued visas to immigrate. However, before we could do so, the American government required proof that we were clean of any crimes or misdemeanors.

In 1949, Teresa and I finally boarded a boat to leave Sicily. This was almost 10 years after the first time Luciano petitioned to have his family join him in the U.S. Upon arriving on American soil was the first time Teresa and I met our brothers and sister who were already in the states when we were born or too young to remember them. The two sisters, who were married and remained in Sicily, finally immigrated to Rockford with their families in 1960. This would be the first time the entire family would be together. Unfortunately, the patriarch of the family, Luciano, would not be there. But the matriarch of the family, Marianna, lived a long life in Rockford until her death in 1980 at the ripe old age of 89.

Submitted on May 9, 2013 by Salvatore (Sam) Ricotta for the Genealogy Project --
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