

Poggioreale Before the Earthquake

by
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2022

This is a story about the activities of the Poggiorealesi in the period between 1950 and 1968, the year of the earthquake that destroyed both the houses, the economy and the social life of the community. The result was a difference that profoundly changed the lives of Poggioreale as well as many other towns in the Belice Valley.

These recollections were given to me by some citizens of Poggioreale based on their personal memories. My thanks go to them. The family names referenced in the story below appear in bold print to point out the family names of the era. Perhaps you will find your own family referenced below.



1 - Bakeries

Before 1968 in Poggioreale there were two bakeries; one was located at the corner between via Tasso and via Castellaccio and was managed by the **Cangelosi family** (nicknamed *bagnara*) after the bakery was bought by the Paladino family. The Paladino family had two children (one was named Nino and later he would become a teacher).

On the death of her husband in 1963, **Signora Paladino** sold the oven to the **Mangogna** brothers, **Antonino and Vincenzo**. The father of the **Mangogna** brothers had gone to America to work in order to allow his children to study.

They managed it for a few years and in 1967 they sold it to **Mario Salvato** who moved the site of the bakery from Via Tasso to the steps leading to the mother church at the corner with Via Aragona.

A kilo of bread cost 110 lires, and in addition to bread they made a few trays of biscuits. In the Christmas period they also made Christmas sweets (*cucciddati*).

The bakery also offered the possibility of baking bread to the inhabitants of the village for a fee. The citizens who wanted to bake the bread provided themselves with a table about two meters long and placed six loaves on it. Under the bread they placed a tablecloth woven with a loom. This service cost 30 lires.

Even at Christmas time, the people had the opportunity to bake *cucciddati*. The trays to put the sweets on were provided by the same oven.

The breads that were made were: round with a cut in the center of one kilo and half a kilo, twisted shaped, little loaf of 220 grams (*cucchitedda*).

The comings and goings of people were a spectacle, with tables of bread on their shoulders going to and from the oven.

The other oven belonged to **Mr. Salvatore Nicolosi**, it was located in Via Garibaldi below the intersection of Via Roma. **Mr. Nicolosi** came from Caltabellotta, and his wife was from Favara. It was opened in about 1966.

They also made bread, biscuits and pizza in a tray. This oven did not offer others the service of being able to bake.

On the first night of the earthquake, as people had fled their homes, the local authorities ordered the two ovens to stay and work at night in order to satisfy the displaced population. The bakers risked being crushed under the rubble.

The baker has a hard life and they could barely support the family.

Today **Mario Salvato's** bakery continues to exist, managed by the **Augello** family. **Mr. Nicolosi** sold the oven to his nephew. The **Augello** bakery that exists today in New Poggioreale is the continuation of Mario Salvato bakery.

2 - Carpenters

Before the earthquake in Poggioreale there were three workshops of carpenters. One was that of the brothers **Antonino and Giuseppe Ricca**, located in via Pavone, a side street of Corso Umberto I, which continued south and also overlooked Via Alloro.

They built internal and external doors, windows, and gates. The timber used for these works were planks of various thicknesses of *pispaio* (from the English pitch pine) *Piscipaino* (in dialect). These planks were delivered by a pickup truck of the **Lucentini company** in Castelvetrano.

Coffins were other carpentry artifacts (at this time in Poggioreale there were about 60 deaths a year), along with tables to prepare pasta and sweets, cupboards, wooden plows, benches, and table of various kinds.

They had a power saw. The clients were only from Poggioreale. To get an idea of the costs, a double door cost 35,000 / 40,000 liras.

Another activity carried out by the **Ricca** brothers was to drain and pour the wine. This activity was done in the winter months and consisted in removing the muddy sediment that had formed from the barrel or tank and pouring the wine into a clean barrel or into the barrel itself after cleaning it.

The **Ricca** brothers also owned land, and they spent their free time there when carpentry work was scarce.

Another carpenter was **Cosimo Russo**, located in the Spiazzi Gesù e Maria. Mr. Russo competed with other carpenters in the country because he charged lower prices than others but his work and the materials used were considered of poor quality.

He was better equipped with electric tools. He didn't do the work of racking the wine. At that time, a worker earned from 400 to 700 liras a day.

There was also the carpentry of **Mr. Vito Di Benedetto** who later had a partner in **Pietro Zinnanti**, located on the corner between Via Pindemonte and Largo Castello.

He made the same artifacts as other carpenters but was considered to charge very high prices. He did good work, but the **Ricca** brothers were better. The glass for the external doors was bought in Castelvetrano, while the marble used for the buildings was bought in Partanna.

3 - Blacksmiths

In pre-earthquake Poggioreale there were four workshops of artisan blacksmiths. One was that of the brothers **Gaetano and Liborio** (called *Boniddu*) **Lo Pinto** who came from Roccamena. Their shop was on the corner of Via Manzoni and Largo Cannoli.

Since Poggioreale was mainly an agricultural town and each farmer had one or more mules or horses, horses were also used for mobility and therefore there was a conspicuous presence of these animals.

For this reason, the main activity of blacksmiths was that of shoeing horses. It consisted of building the horseshoes and nails and applying them after the nails have been clipped.

Another job that blacksmiths dedicate themselves to was the branding of horses. It consisted in cutting the hair in the area above the foreleg and placing a hot iron on which a letter or number had previously been carved.

This brand represented a license plate for registration purposes. **In the 1960s, the blacksmiths of Poggioreale began to weld and then began to do new jobs**, such as iron plows, railings, gates and even doors.

Given their experience and assiduous frequency with horses, they were sometimes called upon to play the role of veterinarians, and although the results were often disappointing, it was understood that they made up for the absence of a real veterinarian.

In the country's economy, the circulation of money was very scarce and payments often took place in nature and above all occurred at the time of harvest.

In the blacksmith shops, in a corner, there was a rope hanging from the wall. Many sticks split in the middle of ferrule were attached to the rope.

Each stick corresponded to a customer and on it in the flat part, and the customer's name was written in the curved part. The work done and to be paid was noted with a sign. The work was of course paid for at the time of harvest.

Over time, the artisans, seeing that customers were late in paying, equipped themselves with donkeys and when they knew that the customer was about to collect, they personally showed up in the countryside to claim the credit.

Another blacksmith was master **Paolino Ancona**, who had the shop between Largo Cannoli and Via Manzoni, opposite the **Lo Pinto** brothers. He worked less than the other blacksmiths but was precise in his work. He was the first blacksmith to build iron doors and to use the welding machine.

Another blacksmith's shop was that of **Cosimo Lipari** with his sons **Antonino and Filippo**, who was always in the Cannoli area. Some said he was a bit of a cheat. After he retired, his children continued their business even in the slum.

The fourth blacksmith's shop was that of **Calogero Campisi**, it was located at the corner between Via Petrarca and Via Marmitte, **Mr. Campisi** remaining refractory to novelties such as that of the welding machine. The children did not continue the business looking for work in other sectors.

The Cannoli area as we have seen was populated by three blacksmith shops. The reason why the blacksmiths concentrated in this area was due not only to the spring but also to the presence of a wash house for mules.

4 - Food Shops

There were several food shops, which were called "*putie*." The most well-stocked and renowned was that of **Mr. Messina Giuseppe**, which was located in Piazza Elio, at the corner with the right side of the steps. The shop was managed by his wife **Lunidda** Amodei, and assisted by her son **Giuseppe** who went to Palermo to load the goods with his Fiat 600 Multipla.

The shop occupied a room of about 30 square meters and sold everything that was on the market at the time: legumes, canned goods, cured meats, fruit and vegetables, pasta, sugar, underwear, haberdashery, socks, etc.

The detergents that were sold at the time were Omo and Olà, and in each shop there was a barrel of soft soap with a trowel inside that was sold by weight in the rough and thick paper. In most cases, it was bought on credit. For each customer he kept a notebook where everything he bought was noted.

At the time of harvest, each customer was obliged to pay. He could also be paid in barter by giving in exchange for the goods he had bought for himself (like eggs, wheat and other products from the countryside). A kilo of pasta cost 25/30 liras. An egg in summer cost 15 liras, but in winter it cost 25 liras.

Mr. Antonino Di Benedetto had a food shop on the Manzoni slope right in front of the left side of the Mother Church. In addition to various foods, it also sold work tools for peasants and masons and

also enamels and paints and colors. She also sold some underclothes. Mr. **Di Benedetto's** shop was known as the one that didn't give credit, so you had to pay in cash or in barter.

Mr. Calogero Cangelosi (called *baruneddu*) came from the grain trade. He bought wheat and in exchange gave flour, bran or pasta. The pasta came from the Madonna del Balzo pasta factory in Bisacquino.

Around 1963 he opened a grocery shop in Via Aragona, right next to **Mario Salvato'** bakery. **Calogero Cangelosi**, whose current trade was the sale of food products, increasingly expanded towards other goods, such as glasses, plates, linen and household appliances. Immediately after the earthquake, he moved this business into the barracks.

There was also **Mrs. Filippa Vella's** shop, located at the corner between Salita Castello and Via Terranova. Mrs. Filippa Vella lived in the shop, and this was known as "*house and putia*." She sold various foods and Ferrero products.

There was also the shop of Mrs. Giuseppa Pace, married to **Mr. Antonino Marrone**. It was located in Via Garibaldi, near the elementary school. In addition to food, she also sold linen (socks, underwear).

Then there was Mrs. Maiorana's shop, married to **Antonino Paladino**. It was located in Via Garibaldi at the corner with Via Roma. This shop sold pasta, sugar in jute bags and other food products, linen and household items. At Christmas time, she sold nativity figures and decorations for the Christmas tree. Subsequently, she had started with the sale of gas cylinders, which increased her sales so much that she moved to Piazza Elimo, at the corner with Corso Umberto I. It was said that she was a skilled shopkeeper.

The shop of Mr. Angelo Amodei was located in Corso Umberto I, next to the Church of Sant'Antonio. In addition to selling food, it also served as a telephone switchboard, so it was the place where people went to make phone calls or receive phone calls from relatives and family members who emigrated to America, Australia and elsewhere. It sold gas cylinders of the Agip brand, as well as tickets for the buses that went to Trapani, Palermo and the surroundings of Poggioreale. The sale of bus tickets, especially in winter, transformed the shop into a waiting room.

Mrs. Nunzia Falsone's shop was located in Corso Umberto I °. In addition to groceries, it also sold socks, children's clothes, chocolates and candies, Christmas decorations, fruit and eggs. **Signora Nunzia** would barter for anyone who brought her eggs, allowing the exchange of salted sardines, spoons of jam or anything else she had at her disposal. She was married to **Francesco Corte** who later emigrated to the United States, taking his son **GIUSEPPE Corte** with him. This shop worked quite well. The Corte sons, Gino and little brother Pietro, stayed in Poggioreale with their mother for 7 years running the store before their father, Francesco, brought them over to America to be with him and Giuseppe.

Finally, we remember the shop of Mrs. Francesca Ricca, married to **Rosario Corte**, which was located in Corso Umberto I °, just before the house of the Marquis Morso Naselli, which sold cured meats and various foods, stockings and haberdashery.

5 - Butchers

After talking about the food shops in the town, it's time to talk about the butchers.

It seems that the operators of this activity of the sale of meat carried only the surname **Pace**. In fact, in the Via Aragona area there was the butcher of **Mr. Antonino Pace**. It is still possible today to see the metal hooks where the bodies or pieces of the animals for sale were hung. The animals were slaughtered in the same village. The slaughterhouse was located 500 meters before the cemetery. After

slaughter, the animals were transported by a special covered wagon pulled by mules. The butcher's shop sold sheep and lamb meat, goats' meat, pigs, poultry and sometimes veal which, when slaughtered, was divided among the butchers of the town. Local meat was consumed.

Antonino Pace's son, Giuseppe, then moved the business to Corso Umberto I°. **Vincenzo Pace** was a thin, tall young man with thick black glasses, and was the nephew of **Giuseppe Pace**, a butcher. He lived in Via Roma, at the corner of Via Regina Margherita, and had taken over the butcher's shop of another **Vincenzo Pace**, which was in Corso Umberto I, in front of the municipal theater. After a few years of activity, he emigrated to Australia.

Between Corso Umberto I° and the corner of Via Castellaccio, there was the butcher's shop of **Mr. Vincenzo Pace**, married to **Elisabetta Pace**.

At the corner of Piazza Elimo and Corso Umberto I, there was the butcher's shop of **Mr. Giuseppe Pace**, father of Mrs. Giuseppina who ran a food shop that we have already mentioned.

After the earthquake, **Giuseppe Pace** continued his activity in the barracks and then in Corso Umberto I of the new Poggioreale. **Vincenzo Pace** and then his son **Nunzio** also continued the business of butchers first in the shacks and then in the new town.

6 - Bars

In the ancient Poggioreale there were bars. Among these, right in the steps leading to the Mother Church, was **Giuseppe Vella's** bar, which sold coffee, liqueurs, ice creams and slushes. The ice cream was made by hand, without the aid of machines.

The bars were meeting places for people. To the right of the bar there were tables with chairs where people played cards. After closing, it would become a game room, with over six tables for card games. There was also a pool table and gaming machines. The bar and the games room were stopping places for young males who were waiting for the girls to leave Mass.

The game room was managed by **Giovanni Falsone**. **Luigi Vella's** bar was located on the right side of Corso Umberto I°, just before Piazza Elimo. It sold coffee, liqueurs, soft drinks, ice creams, slushes and ice cream cakes. It also had an ice cream and cake home delivery service. The ice cream was cut into pieces and wrapped in special paper for delivery.

The flavors in vogue were: chocolate, hazelnut and milk. The bar also sold pastries (cannoli, stuffed pastas, sweets) which was supplied by the **Nino Genco** pastry shop in Santa Ninfa. At the side of the entrance, it had two showcases where sweets and holiday items were displayed - panettone at Christmas, marzipan lambs, martorana fruit and eggs at Easter. A coffee cost from 10 to 20 lires, and cannoli cost 50 lires. An employee of the bar earned three thousand lires a month. In the bar there were three tables and a billiards table.

After the earthquake, the bar was managed by his son Antonino Vella, remaining in operation both in the shacks and in the new town with the name of **Bar degli Archi**.

Also, in Piazza Elimo, next to the Church of Purgatory, there was the bar owned by **Mr. Salvatore Luna**. It had two entrances, one for the bar and the other for the games room. Card games were played and there were also gaming machines. The bar sold coffee, liqueurs, ice-cream drinks, slushes and even pastry that was brought by **Pietro Genco** from Santa Ninfa. The bar was then bought by the son-in-law **Giovan Battista Culmone** who also worked in the shacks, and today it is located in the new town in Via Umberto I°.

In Piazza Elimo itself there was the bar run by **Mr. Giuseppe Cucchiara** and **Angelo Santalucia**, and it had two entrances. Later **Giuseppe Cucchiara** remained to manage the bar with his wife. After the

earthquake he moved into the shacks. The bar changed management to **Mr. Salvatore Sansone** and today is located in the new town as Bar Vella.

7 - Shoemakers and Barbers

Another activity that animated the town were the shoemakers whose work consisted of repairing shoes and creating new shoes for both men and women.

The leathers and hides were bought in Palermo both personally and through couriers and the work in most cases was all done by hand except for some seams that were done with the sewing machine. The premises where a shoemaker carried out the craft activity were called "*la putia di mastru*" to which the name and surname were added.

In Corso Umberto I° there was the *putia of mastru Maruzzo*, a certain **Mario Tusa**, a short, bald man with glasses, with a little hump, who alternated his work as a cobbler with that of a barber in his room. *Mastru Maruzzo* repaired shoes and also made new shoes. He was a very respected and appreciated person for how he worked. It was possible to pay in deferred form which normally coincided with the harvest. The work of a barber, which he carried out mainly on holidays and pre-holidays, was practiced in the opposite corner where he did that of *scarparu* (shoemaker). In 1964 **Mastru Maruzzo** emigrated to Australia.

In the Spiazzo Gesù e Maria at the corner of Via Noce there was the shop of "*mastru Minicu*." **Domenico Salvaggio** who shared the work with another friend of the surname Pizzolato, also worked as a barber, but when he had to carry out the work as a barber he moved to another place in Corso Umberto I°, next to the butcher of **Mr. Vincenzo Pace**.

They repaired shoes and made new shoes, and they worked a lot with women's shoes. **Mr. Pizzolato** emigrated to Australia and **Mr. Salvaggio** continued the activity even after the earthquake in the barracks.

At the beginning of the steps leading to the Mother Church, on the left, there was the shop of **Mr. Calogero Tritico**, *mastru Caloiaru*, nicknamed "*timpuni*." He was a shoemaker, from a wealthy family, had land, was not considered a precise master at work, and had no children. He hardly worked with women's shoes. He made boots for the countryside. In the early 1960s, a pair of shoes cost six thousand liras. A pair of top heels cost 100 liras.

At the end of Via Garibaldi there was the shop of **Mr. Salvatore Vitale**, who did not make credit. He was not a very appreciated shoemaker. He made repairs and did not make new shoes, and because he had a large family, he was forced to do other jobs.

Also in Corso Umberto I°, after the Church of Sant'Antonio, there was the cobbler's shop of the brothers **Antonino and Giovanni Salvaggio**. **Antonino** was unmarried and left his job to go to work at the post office. They were nicknamed "*lu vavusu*." They worked both as shoemakers and barbers. They had a large room, and in one corner there was a shoemaker's stand and in the opposite corner there was the chair where the customer sat for the haircut or the shaving of the beard. The clientele was exclusively male. Carrying out the activity of barbers more, they were the first to modernize the place by buying a new chair specifically for barbers that swiveled and reclined. The Superenalotto (lottery) added to this activity of barbers and shoemakers.

At the end of the 1950s, coming from Camporeale, he opened a barber's room in Piazza Elimo, opposite for those coming from Corso Umberto I° and next to the Cultural Club a certain **Carmelo**. He immediately got noticed for the innovations he brought into his business, like new chairs, new sinks, hair dryers, mirrors and other attractions amongst which we must remember the perfumed calendars that

depicted beautiful semi-dressed women. **Carmelo**, being an innovator, had attracted most of the young people among his clients. He continued his barber business even after the earthquake.

Also in Corso Umberto I°, at the height of Via Arciprete Agosta, there was the shop of **Mr. Salvatore Ippolito**, who was a shoemaker and barber. He was a lazy man for whom he worked little, and in his work he often got lost in political chatter. He was a socialist. The shop was rented and worked only with repairs and not with new shoes. Gino Corte who now lives in America remembers that he used to help Mr. Ippolito in his barber shop on Fridays when he was a boy. The farmers would come into town for a shave. Gino said he stood on a little stool to reach and he would put the soap lather on their faces.

All the barbers we talked about were exclusively and strictly for men. There were only two hairdressers for women. One was Mrs. Tritico, who had her business in Via Addolorata, and eventually emigrated to Australia. The other was owned by **2 sisters** in Via Silvio Pellico.

In those years, many women from Poggioreale went to Salaparuta or Gibellina to do their hair. As for clothing between the late 1950s and 1960s, there were still no shops that sold these products, so men and women went to tailors and seamstresses who sewed tailor-made clothes. Sometimes it was necessary for the customer to supply the fabrics for the clothes, and other times it was the tailor himself, who had a sample of fabrics, to order the fabrics.

8 - Tailors

In Via Arciprete Nunzio Caronna there was the tailor shop of Mr. Giuliano Corte "lu zu Giulianu." This tailor's shop was frequented by many boys for two reasons: to learn the craft of a tailor and to learn to play a musical instrument.

In fact, **Mr. Giuliano**, in addition to being a good tailor, was also a good musician. The nephew of **Antonino Maniscalco**, **Mr. Pietro Ippolito** and his wife also worked in this shop. Since there was a female presence, the tailor-made clothes for men and women. Pants, jackets, suits for men, and also skirts and dresses for women.

A dress cost between 10 and 16 thousand liras. Within this tailor's shop, the musical band was born and the tailor's shop was both a place for practicing their instruments and to learn the job of being a tailor.

Later **Mr. Giuliano Corte** abandoned this job and became a music teacher in the middle school. In 1966 **Antonino Maniscalco** and **Pietro Ippolito** left Mr. Giuliano's tailor's shop to set up on their own and opened a tailor's shop in Discesa Cappuccini.

In Via Addolorata there was the tailoring of the brothers **Antonino and Gaetano Cannella**, who were young and modern. They made beautiful clothes, and had the fabric samples of the renowned brand "Ermenegildo Zegna." They ordered the fabrics and they were shipped by the postal office. The **Cannella brothers** also emigrated to Australia.

Another tailor was Mr. Giovanni Milazzo, who had a tailor's shop in a rented house in Via Indipendenza. At work he was slow but was also respected. He resisted until the construction of the barracks and then, like the others, closed their doors. As tailors for women in Piazza Vittorio Veneto, there was that of the sisters **Angelina and Giuseppa Corte**, and also the sisters of Mr. Giuliano, the tailor and music teacher. Many girls attended the tailor's shop to learn the job. They closed before 1968.

In Discesa Cappuccini there was the tailor shop for women of **Mrs. Elisabetta Cannizzaro**, married to Messina, and her two daughters also worked there. It was a very popular tailor's shop for the elegance and refinement of the artifacts they created.

In Via Cavour there was the women's tailoring of **Mrs. Francesca Calia**, married **Inglima**, and she was assisted by her two daughters. Due to the development of the clothing and footwear industries, along with the opening of other shoe and clothing stores, both the men and women's tailors, and the shoemakers (who made shoes by hand) went into severe crisis and suddenly closed their shops.

The tailors could not exist without the presence of fabric shops, called "*panneri*." In Poggioreale there were two *panneri*. One was the shop of the **Allegro sisters**, located in the middle of Via Terranova. The **Allegro sisters**, although elderly, were tall, elegant and presented themselves well thanks also to their culture. They sold all kinds of fabrics and also buttons and haberdashery, thread and wool, which sold on credit. There was also the cloth shop of **Mrs. Palma Tritico**, married to **Antonino Salvaggio**, which located in Via Castellaccio near the church of Sant'Antonio. She also took credit.

9 - Clubs

In addition to the aforementioned shops, stores, craft activities, various trades which moved the economy and the sociality of the country, concentrated for the most part, as we have seen in the road axis of Corso Umberto I° and Piazza Elimo, were no less important for the social relations of the community the clubs and the seats of political parties. The clubs, in addition to the place where they were located and the premises they occupy, were distinguished by the social classes and age groups they attended. The clubs were places of meeting and conversation and places where cards were played.

There was the Club "Lega degli Agricoltori," located in Piazza Elimo, near the steps. It was always open, and it had a person who was called a "waiter" who had the task of opening and closing, cleaning, managing the game of cards and other management tasks. It was frequented by the "*burgisi*," and above all by the elderly.

In the same Piazza Elimo there was also the Hunters' Club, which had Diana, goddess of hunting in its sign, and was frequented by employees of the Municipality and the tax office and by craftsmen.

Also, in Piazza Elimo itself was the "Giovanni Meli" Culture Club, frequented by bank employees and students. The headquarters of the Christian Democrats was in Piazza Elimo, the headquarters of the Socialist Party are in Corso Umberto I, and that of the Communist Party in Via Indipendenza.

10 - Masons

The construction and repair of the houses was carried out by local workers. Of all the masons, the **Stillone** family stood out for the quality in the execution of the work. His son **Ignazio Stillone** set up a construction company that worked in Palermo and then returned to work in Poggioreale for the preparation of the temporary houses. Other masons were master **Ignazio Tusa**, **Gaspare Messina** and **Calogero Cascio**.

11. Fish Market

In the 1950s the new fish market was built in Largo Castello. It was a market with a roof and walls on two sides. There were three thick marble tables, two were used to place fish and one was used for support. One or two fishmongers came in the morning from Mazara del Vallo, and in addition to the fish

they brought ice, both in blocks and grains. The fish that were sold were *ritunnu, pisci palummo, sardi, vopi and scurmi* (menole, palombi, boghe, sardines, mackerel). Buying fish was possible for those who had money because there was no credit. On average a kilo of fish cost 50 lire.

12 - Farmers and Shepherds

Poggioreale was a purely agricultural town, and it had a large extension of land and fiefdoms.

What had changed the agricultural economy of the town took place after 1927 when the land and the Cautali fiefdom that once belonged to the Cangelosi family was sold. Since they were childless, they had left everything to the Female Orphanage. For some years the administration of the Orphanage had tried to carry on the management and cultivation of these lands, but following political and social pressures, it had to give in to the sale of these lands which then passed into the hands of the Poggiorealese families.

This was a reason for rebirth and development for the country's economy. Advantages in the purchase of the new land properties had those who enjoyed the remittances of the emigrants, first in the US, then in Australia.

Until the 1950s, wheat, broad beans, oats, and some olive groves and almond trees were grown. The cultivation of vegetables, fruit and vineyards was done only for family consumption. The cultivation of the land was done in most cases with mules and horses and the same for the transport of food were used carts pulled by horses. Only the great fiefdoms in the 1950s began to buy tractors. In each peasant house there was a stable for the mules and a room used as a storage room for straw, called "*pagliatora*."

Farmers could be grouped into three sized brackets, large, medium and small. The large company used other manpower in addition to the family one and, during the harvest period, also reapers came from other neighboring countries such as Marsala and Alcamo. A part of the land was given to sharecropping and in this case the crop was divided in half with the owner.

From the 1950s to the early 1960s, mechanization began to spread. The tractors arrived and the thresher arrived to separate the wheat from the straw. Before the threshing, the wheat was obtained by trampling the harvested mules. In the 1960s, the presence of Marsala and Alcamo laborers influenced the birth and spread of the vineyards. During the olive harvest period, the so-called "*trappiti*" oil mills opened. In Via Trappeto there was the oil mill of **Mrs. Marannina**, in Via Castellaccio there was the oil mill of **Giuseppe Campisi**, in Via Regina Margherita there was the oil mill of **Giuseppe Salvaggio**, and in Via Indipendenza the oil mill of **Tamburello**.

There was no shortage of *ricotta, zabbina* and cheeses of various kinds as there were several shepherds, among them the most numerous flock was that of **Mr. Alfonso Pizzolato**. There was also the shepherd **Antonino Pensabene** with his children, the shepherd **Gioacchino Viola** and **Felice Aloisio**.

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A Message from the Author:

This story was commissioned by the Co-Founders of Poggioreale in America who were interested in presenting a vibrant description of life in Poggioreale during the time when many of their ancestors left the country to emigrate to America, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. And so I turned to living persons who remembered the years between 1950 and the beginning of

1960. I have observed that the period under consideration does not differ so much from the socio-economic point of view of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that accelerations occurred after 1975.

I consider it important to tell the evolution of such places and people who live in them because I believe it is just as important know one's past and crystalize the memories where individual personal stories merge and become one with the place in which they occurred. Furthermore, this narrative aims to animate the old town of Poggioreale, to fill it with images of the men and women who do their work, who talk, who move objects and animals, who perform arts and crafts, who know and face hardships, experience human relationships ... and who offer and receive smiles.

Editor's Note: To read biographical information about Rosario Sanfilippo, simply go to our search bar at poggiorealeinamerica.com, and enter his name. Click on our page entitled, "Friends and Contributors in Sicily."

