

Nellina Salvaggio Remembers

“Poggioreale Before the Earthquake”

As Told to Tina Anderson

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In the 1950s, our town, Poggioreale, was going through a period of well-being, our town enjoyed flourishing agriculture, the grain was stored in the agricultural consortium which was located above the premises of the charitable works and under the hospital patient rooms, there accessed from the road that leads to the cemetery with an external staircase, the farmers piled up the grain and called each other the price when it was convenient for them. There weren't the vineyards that there are now but there were enough, there were and still are splendid olive groves of considerable size, there were also some beautiful almond groves. In Poggioreale there were two water mills in the woman's dagala condrada belonging to the Cannizzaro family, a stone mill belonging to the Campisi family, and a very modern cylinder mill for those times belonging to the Salvaggio and Martorana families. There were also three oil mills belonging to the Campisi, Tamburello and Salvaggio families. There were six grocery stores, there were four shoemakers who made new shoes, those for Sundays and those for the day. There were three drapery shops, one belonging to the Allegra sisters, one to Mrs. Palma Tritico Salvaggio and one to Mrs. Biagina married Amodei.

There were three men's tailors, Don Giacomo Roppolo tailoring, Giuliano Corte tailoring with Antonino Corte and Antonino Maniscalco, Giovanni Milazzo tailoring. There were four women's tailors, Elisabetta Cannizzaro tailor, Corte Angela tailor, Antonina Inclima tailor, Franca Fontana tailor. There were three carpentry shops, Ricca brothers carpentry, Cosimo Russo carpentry, Vito Dibenedetto carpentry.

There were three teams of bricklayers and they were Master Calogero Cascio, master Ignazio Tusa, master Gaspare Messina. There were three beard and hair salons and they were Salvaggio brothers who were also shoemakers and watch repairers, Giuseppe Cangelosi and Mariano Russo. In Poggioreale there have always been sports lovers, already in the 1950s there was a sports club and a football team.

There were three butcher shops in Poggioreale, there was also a slaughterhouse where the animals needed by the inhabitants were slaughtered. There was also the fish shop where the fish brought from Sciacca and Mazara del Vallo was sold, there was the abbanniaturi Don Vincenzo Maddalena who went around the whole town and announced that the fresh fish had arrived. There was also a large musical band, all excellent musicians. In Poggioreale, when there were no pensions, the poor were hospitalized in the Capuchin convent, the Capuchin friars were no longer there and the poor were assisted by charitable organizations and had no shortage of necessities.

There were eight churches, the orphanage with nuns and many hospitalized children. There was the hospital. There was also Mr. Catarinicchia's rotisserie, and for those coming from outside a small restaurant. In the square there was and still exists a beautiful hotel, the owners were Signora Ninetta Trapani and her husband Professor Messina. In the large rooms on the ground floor the culture club organized beautiful New Year's Eve dinners. There were four recreational clubs, the culture club, the hunting club, the league club which was the club of the rich, and the Christian Democracy club which was a political party. In the early 1960s the People's Bank also arrived. There were three bars, and two tobacconists.

Lastly I wanted to leave the beautiful municipal theater with a large audience, large stage, three rows of horseshoe-shaped boxes, exceptional acoustics, at the entrance there was the ticket office and the buffoon room. Actors such as Franco Franchi and Ciccio Ingrassia performed in our theater, their films are still broadcast on television, then the Zappala' company stopped for months. I wanted to introduce you to the realities of our country because I happened to read on FACEBOOK that Poggioreale was a backward village in the hinterland and that the life we lived was the same as that of the nineteenth century, I wonder, what must it have had in plus a town of 3500 inhabitants so as not to be backward? Poggioreale was not an inland town but was and is a town in the center of western Sicily, a strategic place, so much so that Prince Morso Naselli called it Poggio Reale. Poggioreale is located, as I said before, in the center of western Sicily and it takes half an hour to reach Castelvetro, half an hour to Alcamo and Castellammare del Golfo, half an hour to reach Sciacca, less than an hour to Palermo and an hour to Trapani . Later I will tell you about the carnival balls and all the village festivals.

I lived the 50s and 60s in Poggioreale like the rest of my life, and I assure you that Poggioreale was a cutting-edge town for those times. I hope I haven't bored you, a hug.