

**Poggioreale in America
2022 Student Scholarship Essay**

by

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Giovanni Palazzotto (John) was born in Poggioreale, Sicily on December 4, 1884. His parents were Mariano and Vincenza (Salvato) Palasota. John's education was limited to the fourth grade. His father would not let him continue his education because he was needed to help with family needs. Even though his education was limited, he was known for his storytelling and published poems in Poggioreale. John had two brothers and two sisters. John and his two brothers were able to move to America, but one of his sisters had a health problem and she was not allowed to travel to America because of travel restrictions. His father, mother, and sisters all stayed in Poggioreale to live.

John boarded the S.S. Liguria on September 18, 1910 with his destination for the port of New Orleans in order to meet with his brother Pietro in Navasota, Texas. John was 26 years old when he arrived in America. When he arrived he only had \$47.00 and didn't comprehend the English language. In order to earn money, he worked in New Orleans unloading ships. One story that he told was that when he was unloading ships his boss would tell him to slow down and not work so hard. Not understanding what was being said, he thought they wanted him to work faster.

Once he earned enough money, he moved to Navasota, Texas to join his brother Pietro. They farmed cotton until the flood of 1913 which destroyed all

of their possessions. They then moved to Bryan, Texas. In 1913 their other brother, Salvatore (Sam) Palazzotto, came to America to join his brothers in Bryan, Texas. With limited education John and his brother Sam became carpenters.

John was a very religious person who dedicated his life to Saint Anthony and Saint Joseph. He had a major part in building and naming of the current St. Anthony's Catholic Church. For the Feast of St. Joseph he was known for leading the novena rosary at St. Joseph altars. John wrote a poem to St. Joseph which is still recited at altars in Poggioreale, Sicily and Bryan, Texas. My ancestors have contributed to who I am as a person today mainly in my religion and family traditions. My family is very close and this is in part because of our Italian heritage. We all still live in Bryan, Texas and go to the church that John helped build and name. Every year at the time of lent we attend an altar to St. Joseph where we recite the novena rosary and the poem that he wrote to St. Joseph. John and his brothers went through a lot of hardship to get my family to where we are today, and without their hard work and sacrifice I would not be who I am today.