

**Poggioreale in America
2022 Student Scholarship Essay**

by

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On December 4, 1884, Giovanni Palazzotto (John) was born in Poggioreale, Sicily. Mariano and Vincenza Palasota were his parents. His education was restricted to the fourth grade when he was a child. Because he was needed to help with family needs, his father did not allow him to pursue his study. In Poggioreale, he was recognized as a poet and storyteller. He would write his poems in ledgers when he was able. While in Poggioreale, he had a number of poetry published. Mariano and Vincenza had three boys, Pietro, Giovanni, and Salvatore, as well as two daughters, Antonina (deaf) and Filippa. The three sons were able to travel to the United States. Antonina was unable to travel to America due to her health issue, Mariano, Vicenza, Antonina, and Filippa remained in Poggioreale.

On September 18, 1910, Giovanni Palazzotto boarded the Italian Passenger Ship "S.S. Liguria" at Palermo, Sicily, Italy, with a destination of the Port of New Orleans. He was 26 years old, a single farm laborer, and able to read, according to the *S.S. Liguria* Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild. His route was to Navasota, Texas, to meet up with his brother Pietro Palazzotto. He had a ticket, paid for his journey, and had \$47.00 in his pocket. On October 7, 1910, he arrived at the Port of New Orleans. Pietro had done the journey on the S.S Nord America a few years before. On November 10, 1906, he arrived at Ellis Island.

To make money while in New Orleans, he worked unloading ships. He put in a lot of effort. It was challenging for him at first because he couldn't understand English. His employer woul advise him to slow down and take his time unloading the ships as he was unloading bananas, according to one tale he told. He misunderstood what they were saying and assumed they wanted him to work quicker. Later, he traveled to Dinkins (Navasota), Texas, to meet up with Pietro. Cotton farming was his and his brother's occupation until the Flood of 1913, which wiped out all of their belongings. After that, they traveled to Bryan. Salvatore (Sam) Palazzotto arrived in America on the S.S. San Gugielmo on October 24, 1913, via Ellis Island, to join his brothers in

Bryan. John and Sam become carpenters despite their lack of schooling. They started a building company, and many of their neighbors hired them to build their houses. Given that neither of these individuals had any prior experience with this type of work, this was an incredible achievement.

Antonina "Lena" Fazzino Risotto was Giovanni's first wife, and the couple had no children together. By her first marriage, Lena had a daughter, Elizabeth Risotto. On April 24, 1937, after Lena's death, he married Annie Stratta Saladino. Vancie and Angelina were their two daughters. Giovanni provided for his family by working as a well-known construction contractor. He was always willing to write letters in Italian for people to send to relatives still living in Sicily, as well as copy letters received.

Giovanni was a devoted Catholic who dedicated his life to Saints Anthony and Joseph. From 1922-1960, he collaborated with Fr. Basil Bravi, an Italian priest, on the construction and naming of the current St. Anthony's Catholic Church. He was the founder and president of the Men's Holy Name Society, as well as an honorary Knight of Columbus member. He would order sculptures and holy cards for the feast day of St. Anthony. He would have the religious items offered to the people for gifts to the church during the celebration of mass. He was recognized for leading the novena rosary for St. Joseph Altars on the Feast of St. Joseph. In a single night, he may have up to three novena rosaries. Vancie and Angelina were lucky enough to have their father and mother teach them the novena rosary and prayers. For households who have St. Joseph Altars, they continue his custom today. He continued to write poems and was known for his storytelling in America. People would come to see him simply to hear his stories. "Versi di Giovanni Palazzotto supra u PATRIARCA SAN GIUSEPPI," one of his main poems, is still recited at the St. Joseph Altars in Poggioreale today. Giovanni Maniscalco of Poggioreale, Sicily, had the original handwritten manuscript. Mr. Maniscalco transcribed the poem into a typewritten version and dedicated the poem at Parrocchia Maria SS Immacolata, Pizza Papa Giovanni XXIII, Poggioreale (TP) 19 Marzo 2010.

Giovanni lived in America for a considerable time and had a wonderful life. He cherished spending time with his 52-year-old wife, daughters, and grandchildren. His tremendous talents, poems, and stories are still remembered today. At the age of 94, he went to be with our Lord on July 6, 1978. Giovanni was my great great grandfather and I am proud to tell his story.