

A Brief History of the Caliguire*

JOSEPHINA AND SANTO CALIGUIRI (kal-a-jur-e)—later, in America, Josephine and Sam Caliguire—came to America from from the mountain town of Petrona,¹ which is located in the Province of Catanzaro in the region of Calabria in southern Italy—in the “toe” of the “boot.” You will notice the first three letters in the name “Caliguiri” come from the first three letters of “Calabria.” There are many similar names in the region.

Santo was born June 17, 1883 to Maria Rosa Pullana (or Pullano) and Tommaso Caliguiri (in Italy, women traditionally keep their maiden names and the children take their father’s surnames). She was first married to Joseph Lucia and had one child, Joseph Lucia, Jr. When Joseph Lucia, Sr. died, she married Tommaso Caliguiri. Santo was their only child. Pullana and Tommaso later separated; he remarried and she eventually moved to St. Paul. He and his new wife had two boys, Vincenza and Thomasa, and a foster daughter (who was later abandoned as a child for unknown reasons). So Santo had one half brother from his mother’s

**Pieced together by Tony Dierckins from typed and hand-written notes written by Auntie Theresa dated January 1996 and from her notes made on a family tree dated August 1994, additional information found by Ann Neilsen and Laurie Emerson, provided by Auntie Virginia, and a translation of Santo and Josephine Caliguire’s passports. Unfortunately, a few of Auntie Theresa’s numbers and dates don’t add up, and these anomalies are pointed out within the text. See the notes on page 8.*



Since photos were not used at the time, Santo and Josephina's passports describe their facial features and physical sizes. According to his passport, when Santo came to America in 1903 he was 20 years old (it must be a replacement passport, as he was 14 on his first trip to America), had a "regular" forehead, a small nose, blond hair, no beard or mustache, was of "natural" skin color, had a small physique, and a scar. (Illegible writing makes it unclear of the scar's location or his eye color, though we know he had blue eyes). Josephina was 26 when she came to America; she had a "fair" forehead, "heavenly" blue eyes (*celesti*, they were actually green), a Grecian nose, a fair mouth, chestnut brown hair, dark brown skin (*bruno*), and a mark (*marchie*, literally "brand") on her forehead. They are both described as "country people" or "peasants" (*contadina*). Josephina's passport also states that her daughter "Rosa" (Rosina), three years old at the time, accompanied her.

first marriage, Joseph Lucia Sr., and two half brothers (and a foster sister) named Caliguiri from his father's second marriage.

Joseph Lucia's children are our cousins Sam, Jim, Tom, and Katherine Edstrom, Rose Borelli, Mary Talerico, and Josie Krass. Santo's Caliguiri half-brothers never left Italy, and he would never go back to visit once he and Josephina were both in America because he felt they would think he was rich and would expect money from him. One half-brother died in

1974 and the other in 1986; both were in their eighties. The foster daughter has most likely passed by now.

In Petrona, there was very little work except raising mushrooms, chestnuts, and olives. Santo later told his children he had to go out at the age of eight and ride a donkey around to gather branches for firewood for others who, in turn, gave him food. His family was very, very poor. (On their passports, Santo and Josephina are described as “peasants.”) Many of Petrona’s men went to Germany to find work. Santo sought employment in America.

Santo first came to America in 1897 when he was fourteen. He lived with his half-brother Joe Lucia and Joe’s wife Antoinette above a grocery store on Collins Street in St. Paul, next door to an old folks home for black people. (After they tore the home down, the city erected a park now known as “Railroad Island” near Capital Supply at Burr and Tedesco). Santo went back and forth between the U.S. and Italy several times, including once in 1901 when he made an attempt to find work in Montana.³

During the times Santo went back and forth, he stayed in boarding houses—homes other immigrants opened to the men. They offered rooms, laundry, and home-cooked meals. The men staying there were known as “boarders.” The extra income brought in by boarders helped the homeowners with their financial difficulties. The hardship was on the women who were raising big families and were very subservient—they had to wait on their husbands and also had to do all the boarding house duties.



Friends and relatives in Petrona. Second from left (1) is Grandma Peppina’s mother Tosina Colosimo; on the far right (2) is family friend Rose Corte.



Great-Grandma Rosina Colosimo, Peppina's mother, holding Louis I, who died in Italy while still an infant.



Great-Grandma Maria Pullana, Santo's mother, who eventually moved to America and is buried at St. Paul's Calvary Cemetery.

Unable to secure solid employment, Santo went back to Italy and on June 20, 1911, he married Jiuseppina (Josephina) Rosa Caliguiri, nicknamed "Peppina" (literally, "Little Jo"). She was born June 10, 1887, to Santa Rosina Colosimo⁴ (called simply Rosina) and Luigi Caliguiri (no relation to Santo; "Caliguiri" is a very common surname in the Calabrian region). Josephina had two sisters and two brothers. One sister died in 1886 at he age of 93, another one in her early twenties. One brother died in 1974 in his eighties, and the other brother, Louis, died in his twenties.⁵

Santo and Josephina had two children born to them in Italy, a daughter, Rosina (Rose), in 1912 and a son named Louis in 1913. Santo stayed in Italy until Rosa was born in 1912, then returned to America in 1913

after Josephina became pregnant with Louis I. Santo brought several cousins and friends with him to America, including Josephina's brother Louis. They moved to St. Paul and this time Santo was fortunate enough to find work on the railroad.

When Santo signed his emigration papers, the final "i" of "Caliguiri" was looped so much that it looked like an "e," so his papers were processed with the final *i* as an *e*; Santo's last name was changed to Caliguire.

In 1915, Santo returned to Italy after hearing that Louis was gravely ill. A healthy child, he had been breast fed by a woman in the area who had a surplus of mother's milk (this was a common practice). However, not realizing her sore throat was actually strep, she continued to feed Louis, who contracted the infection and died when he was just eighteen months old. (In those days, little was known about antibiotics, and the people of a small mountain community like Petrona certainly



Grandma Peppina's family in Italy. Seated bottom right (1) is Great-Grandma Rosina Colosimo, to her left (2) is Peppina's sister, and standing between them (3) is Peppina.



Our New York cousins Louis, Fran (left), and either Minnie or Mary Caliguire.



Auntie Rose as a child posing with Santo's step-brothers, Vincenza and Thomasa.

knew nothing of them. The people in Petrona hardly ever saw a doctor because they had to travel to one of the larger cities in order to visit a physician. Transportation was usually by bus; there were very few cars.) Santo stayed in Italy long enough to bury his son and for he and Josephina to conceive their second daughter, Theresa (Theresa would be born in St. Paul).

After returning to America in 1915, Santo sent for Josephina, pregnant with Theresa, and Rose, now three years old, to join him in St. Paul. She also brought her girlfriend—another Rosina—with her. After arriving at Ellis Island in late 1915 or early 1916, the Office of Immigration put them on a train to St. Paul and, despite knowing no English, they made the trip safely. In St. Paul, they took a picture to send to Italy to show their relatives they all had arrived safely (page 7, left).

Josephina's friend Rosina married Josephina's brother Louis Colosimo, who had gone to Hibbing to seek work in the mining industry. They had



Postcards of the Caliguire shortly after Peppina and Rose joined Santo in America (left, Peppina is pregnant with Theresa) and again just after Theresa was born (right).

two children, another Louis and another Santo. But the elder Louis contracted a case of the flu, which would turn out to be fatal. While he was dying, Louis Colosimo asked his cousin Louis Caliguiri (yes, another Louis, but no relation to Santo), to care for his wife and children. After Louis Colosimo died, his cousin Louis Caliguiri felt that if he was to care for Rosina and her children, he should marry Rosina, so a marriage of convenience took place. They went from Hibbing to Pennsylvania and worked in the mines, and then to Lackawanna, New York, to work for Bethlehem Steel. They raised five more children together. Many years later Uncle Bunky took Aunt Rosina to Hibbing to visit the gravesite of her first husband, Louis Colosimo. She cried and said, "there is no love like the first love." (Our first cousins in New York are the two oldest children of Louis and Rosina, Louis and Santo. Our other "cousins" from Aunt Rosina are actually much more distant, as they are the offspring of Rosina, who married into the family, and her second husband, who was the cousin

of her first. Those cousins were Fran, Minnie, Phil, yet another Louis, and Mary, Matt, and Joe of Lackawanna, New York.⁶)

In America, nine more children were born to Santo and Josephine: Theresa, James, Dominic (Bunky), Antoinette (Toni), Thomas, Louis II, John, Eleanor, and Virginia. That's a total of eleven children born between 1912 and 1932, ten surviving to adulthood. When Auntie Virginia was born, Santo was 49 and Josephine was 44. The family lived on 9th Street off Lafayette for a few years, then moved to Swede Hollow (now Phalen Creek). The home was on the hill where Noble Engineering is now, half-way down the hill. Their next house was 566 Decatur—now Payne Avenue—and was across from St. Paul Bar. Their last house was at 744 Clark Street; it still stands. Santo was employed by Burlington Northern at their Como Shops for over forty years. All those years he got up at 5 A.M. and took the streetcar to work. He never owned a car or learned to read or write. Peppina died March 23, 1944, at age 58 of a heart attack. Santo had a stroke in May of 1965 and died of a heart attack February 5, 1968, at age 85.

As of September, 2002, Sam and Josephine Caliguire's eleven children have produced forty-three grandchildren, who in turn have produced eighty-seven great-grandchildren (so far), who have themselves put forth fifty-three great-great-grandchildren (so far, including adoptions).

Notes

1. According to all accounts, including his 1903 passport, Santo was born in Petrona. However, his 1922 naturalization papers say he was born in Naples. They also says he came from Naples on the Cedric, a ship of the White Star line (same as the Titanic). However, his Certificate of Arrival (dated July 2, 1914) gives the ship's name as the Verona. We assume the naturalization papers were wrong about his place of birth.
2. According to her death certificate, Maria Pullana died at age 83 in the St. Peter State Hospital on May 13, 1931, of a cerebral hemorrhage. She had been living in St. Paul and went to St. Peter's for care for general arteriosclerosis and "senile psychosis," what today we would call Alzheimer's Disease. She is buried at Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul.
3. Auntie Theresa did not include any dates of his travels, and most of those on his passport are indecipherable.
4. There is a conflict here: Auntie Theresa wrote that Josephina's last name was Colosimo, the same as her mother's. But since children take their father's surnames, it may well have been Caliguiri.
5. A hand-written note adds "her last surviving sister kept in touch with Auntie Tree and she passed away in about 1973 in her late eighties," but that adds up to three sisters.
6. Unfortunately, this adds up to seven children, and earlier Auntie Tree says there were five, Mary, Matt, and Joe may have been the children of one of the five, but this leaves another problem: it now only adds up to four.