

**Giovanni Palazzotto**  
**“A Poet of Poggioreale, Tapani, Sicily”**

Written by Daughter Angelina Krolczyk

Giovanni Palazzotto (John) was born in Poggioreale, Sicily on December 4, 1884. His parents were Mariano and Vincenza (Salvato) Palasota. He was named after his maternal grandfather, Giovanni Salvato.

As a boy his 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. He was known as a poet and story teller in Poggioreale. When he was able, he would write his poems in ledgers. He had many poems published while in Poggioreale. Mariano and Vincenza had three sons: Pietro, Giovanni and Salvatore and two daughters: Antonina (who was considered deaf) and Filippa. The three sons were able to come to America. Since Antonina had a health problem, she was not allowed to travel to America, so Mariano, Vicenza, Antonina and Filippa stayed in Poggioreale to live.

Giovanni Palazzotto boarded the Italian Passenger Ship “S.S. Liguria” September 18, 1910 in Palermo Sicily, Italy with his destination for the Port of New Orleans. The S.S. Liguria Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild states he was 26 years of age, a male, single, farm laborer and able to read. Destination was to join his brother Pietro Palazzotto in Navasota, Texas. He had a ticket, passage was paid by himself and he had in his possession \$47.00. He arrived at the Port of New Orleans, October 7, 1910. Pietro had made the trip a few years earlier on the S.S Nord America. He arrived at Ellis Island on November 10, 1906.

While in New Orleans, in order to earn money, he worked at unloading ships. He was a very hard worker. Not being able to understand English, it was a hardship for him at the beginning. One story that he told was when he was unloading bananas, his boss would tell him to slow down and take his time

unloading the ships. Not understanding what was being said, he thought that they wanted him to work faster.

He later journeyed to Dinkins (Navasota), Texas to join Pietro. He and his brother cotton farmed there until the Flood of 1913, which destroyed all their possessions. They then moved to Bryan. On October 24 1913, Salvatore (Sam) Palazzotto (the younger brother) came to America on the S.S. San Guglielmo, through Ellis Island, to join his brothers in Bryan. With limited education, John and Sam became carpenters. They went into the construction business and many neighbors hired them to build their homes. This was an outstanding accomplishment for both of these men, since they had no prior training for this type of work.

Giovanni's first wife was Antonina "Lena" Fazzino Rissotto and they had no children between themselves. Lena had a daughter by her first marriage – Elizabeth Rissotto. When Lena passed away, he married Annie Stratta Saladino, April 24, 1937. They had two daughters – Vancie and Angelina. Giovanni supported his family by being a well-known building contractor. He was always available to write letters in Italian for people to send to their family members still in Sicily or transcribe letters received.

Giovanni was a very religious person who dedicated his life to Saint Anthony and Saint Joseph. He had a major part in the building and naming of the current St. Anthony's Catholic Church and working with Fr. Basil Bravi, the Italian priest from 1922-1960. He was the organizer and president of the Men's Holy Name Society and an honorary member of the Knights of Columbus. For the Feast of St. Anthony, he would order statues and holy cards for the feast day. At the celebration of mass, he would have the religious items to be offered to the people for contributions to the church. For the Feast of St. Joseph, he was known for leading the novena rosary for St. Joseph Altars. Sometimes he could have up to three novena rosaries in one night. Vancie and Angelina were fortunate to be able to learn the novena rosary and prayers from their father and mother. They still carry on his tradition today for families that have St. Joseph Altars.

In America, he still wrote many poems and was known for storytelling. People would come to visit him just to listen to his stories. One of his major poems “Versi di Giovanni Palazzotto supra lu PATRIARCA SAN GIUSEPPI” is still recited at St. Joseph Altars in Poggioreale today. The original hand-written copy was owned by Giovanni Maniscalco, Poggioreale, Sicily. 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 a long and happy life in America. He enjoyed sharing his life and love with his wife of 52 years, daughters and grandchildren. He is still known today for his many accomplishments, his poems and stories. He went to be with our Lord on July 6, 1978, at the age of 94.