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Portraits of the Past

On the Cover:

Mary (Cesta) Calabrese, ca. 1921
(2 December 1912–16 October 1997)

Mary Cesta was born on 2 December 1912 in Port Henry, New York, to Italian immigrants Gennaro Cesta and Filomena Luciano. Port Henry, on the shores of Lake Champlain, was home to the Witherbee Sherman Mining Company where Mary's father worked. This photograph was taken at Mary's Port Henry elementary school. As an adult, Mary cut her image out of photographs, never happy with how she looked. She hated the shabby clothes in this portrait, but somehow it survived her scissors.

The growing Cesta family shared its small home with boarders, usually friends or family from the old country. About 1922 they moved to the Bronx. In 1925, Mary's father died in an excavation accident, leaving eight children and a widow who struggled to cope, financially and emotionally. The children contributed as they could. Her daughters worked for a laundry service and made lace to sell. Mary babysat. Local storekeepers and bakers kept the family fed. Mary remembered the devastating loss of a week's wages when the money blew out of her hand.

Early marriage presented a welcome escape. At fifteen Mary married Camillo Calabrese, a recent Italian immigrant. Their marriage was happy. They raised six children, welcoming the youngest more than thirty years after the birth of their oldest.

Mary's early poverty shaped her priorities. Her dream of becoming a teacher ended when she dropped out of school after junior high. Yet her focus on education persisted in her hopes for her children: three became educators. She and Camillo invested in real estate, buying, renovating, and selling houses. She had a shrewd eye for property values and might have been a successful real estate agent. Her enterprising spirit kept her looking for opportunities to make money.

Camillo suffered a life-altering stroke in 1968, and died in 1980. An excellent cook and a savvy marketer, Mary often delivered homemade cookies to the owners of homes she wanted to buy. She also cooked meals for the Scarsdale Women's Exchange. In her later years, she was a companion to elderly women and she babysat. Until her death in 1997 she lived surrounded by family and friends.

Credits: Mary's life is documented in the files of her granddaughter Eva Holmes; eva@blindhopes.com. The photo was provided by Eva's mother and Mary's daughter, Deborah Calabrese.

Stanislao Cesta and Fortunato Cesta: Merging Identities

By Eva Holmes, CG, AG

Stanislao Cesta was abandoned at birth. Was he the Fortunato Cesta who emigrated to New York? His birth family was unknown, but Stanislao's children's records in America and Italy resolved the question.

Was the Fortunato Cesta enumerated in Troy, New York, in 1905 the man born in 1849 in Cervinara, Italy, as Stanislao Cesta? Evidence from family connections and records from both countries unite the two identities.

STANISLAO CESTA AND GIUSEPPA MIGNUOLO

Stanislao Cesta's birth registration names no parents. He was abandoned as an infant in Cervinara, Avellino, Italy, on 18 January 1849.¹ Cervinara lies thirty-one miles northwest of Naples in the Valle Caudina, beside an ancient pass linking the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic seas. The commune revolted against Bourbon rule in 1848.²

Institutionalized infant abandonment was widespread in Catholic Europe in the 1800s.³ In Italy, impoverished families as well as unwed mothers could leave babies

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1. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita [Register of the Acts of Birth], 1849," entry 19, Stanislao Cesta; *Portale Antenati* (www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it).

2. For location of Cervinara, see "Cervinara," *Mapcarta* (mapcarta.com/18703658). Also, Giampiero Galasso, *Cervinara: Storia, Arte, Immagini* (Roma: De Angelis Art, 2015), 13, 27–28.

3. David I. Kertzer, "Gender Ideology and Infant Abandonment in Nineteenth-Century Italy," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Summer 1991): 5.

they could not care for at the *ruota*, or foundling wheel, typically a rotating box built into a church wall.⁴ A *ruotara*, or wheel-master, monitored the foundling wheel.⁵

Fortunata Cillo, age sixty, the *rotara di proietti*, or wheel-master of the castaways in Cervinara, received Stanislao. She was responsible for registering his birth and placing him in a *brefotrofio*, or foundling home. In small communities like Cervinara, children could also be placed with foster families.⁶

Stanislao's mother may not have given him up by choice. In earlier times children were abandoned by married couples, but by the nineteenth century most foundlings were born to unwed mothers.⁷ Pregnant unwed women could be confined to maternity hospitals or imprisoned until giving birth. Their children were taken from them. Sometimes these mothers had to serve in foundling homes for up to a year as wet nurses for other children.⁸ Many of the infants died; 50 per cent of foundlings born in Bologna between 1829 and 1850 died in their first year.⁹

Foundlings' names often marked the circumstances of their births.¹⁰ Cesta, not a traditional Italian surname, translates as basket.¹¹ Stanislao was also an unusual given name for the area. Civil records from 1809 to 1945 show only one other Stanislao born in Cervinara.¹² Stanislao's name identified him as different.

In 1866, the Italian Parliament passed a law to recognize only civil marriages; until then only church marriages had been recognized. Children born to a marriage not registered with the state were considered illegitimate. Not uncommonly, couples

4. Anna-Maria Tapaninen, "Wheels of Honour: Child Abandonment between Scandals and Legitimacy in 19th Century Naples" *Suomen Antropologi/Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 3 (Jun 1999): 39–60.

5. David I. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor: Italian Infant Abandonment and the Politics of Reproductive Control* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 109.

6. Tapaninen, "Wheels of Honour," 39–60.

7. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor*, 88–89.

8. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor*, 47–48.

9. David I. Kertzer and Michael J. White, "Cheating the Angel-Makers: Surviving Infant Abandonment in Nineteenth Century Italy," *Continuity and Change* 9 (Dec 1994): 461.

10. Angelo F. Coniglio, "Foundlings," *The Coniglio Family Website* (www.conigliofamily.com/Foundlings.htm).

11. Cesta is not listed as a surname in Ettore Rossoni, *L'Origine Dei Cognomi Italiani Storia Ed Etimologia* (Melegnano, Italy: n.p., 2014). See also, Isopel May, *Putnam's Contemporary Italian Dictionary* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1977), 34, entry for cesta.

12. "Public Member Trees," database, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com), "Cervinara_Italia" family tree by James Lombardi, search for Stanislao. Lombardi transcribed all Cervinara's digitized civil registrations from *Portale Antenati*.

married in a church and registered the marriage later or skipped civil registration altogether.¹³ Cervinara records show only one marriage for Stanislao Cesta to Giuseppa Mignuolo, on 14 September 1889.¹⁴

A father could register the birth of his child if he had married in a church, although such records omitted the name of the mother.¹⁵ Cervinara birth records identify six children born to Stanislao Cesta and an unnamed mother:

1. Angela Cesta, born 5 June 1873¹⁶
2. Angelo Cesta, born 24 September 1875¹⁷
3. Domenico Cesta, born 10 September 1877¹⁸
4. Maria Rosa Cesta, born 22 September 1882¹⁹
5. Gennaro Cesta, born 26 July 1885²⁰
6. Carmine Cesta, born 14 August 1889²¹

A handwritten notation added to the record legitimizes the births of sons Domenico, Gennaro, and Carmine. The marriage was also noted in the birth records of brothers Gennaro and Carmine.²² Three other children of the couple died before 1889.²³ Several of Stanislao's children share names with Giuseppa's parents, suggesting

13. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor*, 21–23.

14. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio [Register of the Acts of Matrimony], 1889," entry 36, Stanislao Cesta and Giuseppa Mignuolo. The couple may have married in a church but a record has not been located. Requests to area parishes and the diocese for Cervinara church records were not answered. The records likely are not extant. No Cervinara church was included in a 1942 survey of Italian church records by Sergio Pagano and Gianni Venditti, *Il Censimento Degli Archivi Ecclesiastici D'Italia Del 1942* (Vatican City: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2011).

15. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor*, 23.

16. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1873," entry 124, Angela Cesta.

17. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1875," entry 205, Angelo Cesta.

18. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1877," entry 196, Domenico Cesta.

19. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1882," entry 200, Maria Rosa Cesta.

20. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1885," entry 192, Gennaro Cesta.

21. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1889," entry 182, Carmine Cesta.

22. For Gennaro's birth, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1885," entry 192, Gennaro Cesta. For Carmine, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1889," entry 182, Carmine Cesta.

23. For births of children who died young, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1873," entry 124, Angela Cesta; "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1875," entry 205, Angelo Cesta; and "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1882," entry 200, Maria Rosa Cesta. For their deaths, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti [Register of the Acts of Death], 1874," entry 178, Angela Cesta; *Portale Antenati*. See also Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1876," entry 139, Angelo Cesta; and Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1886," entry 49, Rosa Cesta.

Giuseppa was their mother.²⁴ Giuseppa and Stanislao's marriage record lists them as *celibe* and *nubile* respectively, indicating each was single. Thus, it was a first marriage for both spouses.

IMMIGRATION TO NEW YORK

Stanislao Cesta, age forty-three, of Italian origin, arrived at the Port of New York on 29 April 1891 from Naples.²⁵ The passenger record offers few other details. Stanislao was initially a bird of passage, an immigrant who intended to stay in the United States long enough to earn money to buy land back home.²⁶ However, after returning to Italy sometime between 1891 and 1896, he sailed again from Naples to New York in 1896.²⁷

Rensselaer County

Italian women retain their birth name after marriage. Passenger lists enumerate them under their maiden name rather than their married name.²⁸ In June 1903 Domenico Cesta's wife Caterina Martone and sons Fortunato and Vito arrived to meet Domenico at 251 Eleventh Street in Troy.²⁹ Giuseppa Mignuolo, fifty-five, and her son Carmino, twelve, landed at Ellis Island two months later to meet her husband, Stanislaw Cesta, who lived at the same address in Troy.³⁰

Although no men named Cesta appear in the Troy city directory in 1903, Stanislao filed a declaration of intent and his sons Domenico and Gennaro filed petitions to

24. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio, 1889," entry 36, Cesta-Mignuolo. Giuseppa's parents were Angelo and Mariarosa. Also, Trafford R. Cole, *Italian Genealogical Records: How to Use Italian Civil, Ecclesiastical, & Other Records in Family History Research* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry, 1995), 56.

25. Manifest, S.S. *Letimbro*, 29 Apr 1891, line 497, Stanislao Cesta; "Passenger lists of vessels arriving at New York, 1820–1897," *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org), Image Group Number (DGS) 1027612, image 288.

26. Melanie D. Holtz, *The Family Tree Italian Genealogy Guide: How to Trace Your Family Tree in Italy* (Cincinnati: Family Tree Books, 2017), 14.

27. Manifest, S.S. *Alsatia*, 11 May 1896, sheet 3 (penned), line 54, Stanislao Cesta; "Passenger lists of vessels arriving at New York, 1820–1897," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1027822, image 729. Neither *Troy's New York City Register* nor *Sampson and Murdock's Directory of Troy* bears entries for Stanislao or Fortunato Cesta or Chesta for the years 1891–95. Stanislao could not be found in the 1892 New York state census, but records for many counties are missing. See Naomi Joshi, *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer*, rev. (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2017), 36–37.

28. Cole, *Italian Genealogical Records*, 54.

29. Manifest, S.S. *Phoenicia*, 19 Jun 1903, list O, sheet 110 (stamped), lines 27–29, Caterina Martone and sons; "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892–1924," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1399053, image 568. For their marriage, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio, 1900," entry 19, Domenico Cesta and Caterina Martone.

30. Manifest, S.S. *Sicilia*, 1 Aug 1903, list 9, lines 10–11, Carmine Cesta and Giuseppa Mignuolo; "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892–1924," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1399064, image 385.

naturalize in Troy that year.³¹ The 1904 and 1905 directories list one Cesta, Stanislaus, living at 249 Fourth Street.³² Stanislaus Cesta does not appear in the 1905 New York state census. Twenty-one-year-old Gennero Cesta and his brother Carmino, however, lived that year at 249 Fourth Street with their parents Furtanto [Fortunato] and Josephinea Cesta, both fifty-seven.³³ Fortunato had been in the country for ten years, his wife and sons for two. Fortunato's length of time in America roughly correlates with Stanislaus's second arrival in 1896. While Gennaro's age approximates his 1885 birth year, Carmine is listed as nineteen but would have been sixteen. However, Carmine and his mother's length of time in the country matches their 1903 arrival.

Enumerated a few houses away was Dominick Cesta, twenty-seven, living with his wife Cathrina, thirty-three, and children Furtanato, six, and Josephine, two. Multiple boarders also lived in the house.³⁴ Given the unique family cluster, Stanislaus seems to have been enumerated under the name Furtanto.

Although the names Stanislaus and Fortunato are quite different, the discrepancy can be explained. Fortunato, meaning lucky, may point to a foundling.³⁵ Foundlings sometimes were surnamed Fortunato.³⁶ Stanislaus may also have used the name Fortunato—lucky to have been found—to honor Fortunata Cillo, the woman who found him in 1849.

31. For Domenico, see Rensselaer Co., Petitions for Naturalization, vol. 1:182–83, Dominico Cesta, 1903; “Petitions for Naturalization, 1903–1906,” *FamilySearch*, DGS 7785057, images 121–22. For Stanislaus, see Rensselaer Co., Alien Declarations, vol. 9:54, Stanislaus Cesta, 1903, “Aliens declarations, 1854–1906,” *FamilySearch*, DGS 7785056, image 904. For Gennaro, see Rensselaer Co., Petitions for Naturalization, vol. 1:242–44, Germaro Cesta, 1903; “Petitions for naturalization, 1903–1906,” *FamilySearch*, DGS 7785057, images 152–53.

32. For 1904, see *Directory of Troy, Watervliet and Green Island, Cohoes and Waterford, New York* (Albany: Sampson & Murdock Co., 1904), 136. Ancestry's version of the 1904 directory is mislabeled as 1902. For 1905, see *Directory of Troy, [and Adjacent Areas]* (Albany: Sampson & Murdock, 1905), 135.

33. 1905 New York state census, Rensselaer Co., Troy, ward 8, election district (ED) 3, p. 19, house number 249, household of Furtanto Cesta; *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7364); New York State Archives, Albany. No men named Stanislaus Cesta or variants were located in a page-by-page search of Troy returns. Statewide database searches on *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch* for Cesta and likely variants were unproductive.

34. 1905 New York state census, Rensselaer Co., pop. sch., Troy, ward 8, ED 3, p. 19, house number 255, household of Dominick Cesto.

35. May, *Putnam's Contemporary Italian Dictionary*, 72, entry for fortunato.

36. Judy Heit, “Tracing Italian Orphans and Illegitimate Children,” *From Little Acorns* (greatoaksgrow.blogspot.com/2010/03/tracing-italian-orphans-illegitimate.html).

Essex County

Stanislao relocated to Port Henry, Essex County, by 8 March 1906.³⁷ Port Henry was the home of Witherbee Sherman Mining Company, which attracted immigrants looking for jobs in the iron-ore industry.³⁸ At least two of Stanislao's sons also settled in Port Henry. On 21 May 1907, Domenico, already a Port Henry resident, purchased two lots on West Street.³⁹ Gennaro Cesta and Filomena Luciano married at Saint Patrick's Church in Port Henry on 11 August 1907.⁴⁰ In December 1908 they purchased one of Domenico's lots, which now included a house.⁴¹ Domenico extended a mortgage to them for \$150.⁴² A week later, Gennaro, also known as John, and Filomena took out another mortgage of \$280 from Carmino Cesta.⁴³ Domenico sold the other lot and house to Stanislao and Giuseppa Cesta that December.⁴⁴ The consideration of one dollar—a token amount paid to record the deed—often indicates one person gifting property to another.⁴⁵

Stanislao declared his intent to become a citizen in Troy. On 8 March 1906, he petitioned for naturalization in Essex County as a resident of Port Henry. Angelo Pignuolo, also of Port Henry, witnessed, just as Domenico Cesta had done for him a year earlier in Troy.⁴⁶ Angelo was born on 30 March 1883 to Domenico Pignuolo,

37. Essex Co., N.Y., Petitions for Naturalization, vol. DR 33:4044, Stanislao Cesta, 1903; "New York, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794–1943," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2880).

38. Patrick F. Farrell, *Through the Light Hole* (Utica, N.Y.: North Country Books, 1997), 56–57.

39. Essex Co., Deed Book, 137:130, James Dundas to Domenico Cesta, 21 May 1907; database and images, *Essex County Clerk* (www.searchiqs.com/nyess).

40. St. Patrick's Church (Port Henry, N.Y.), "Matrimoniorum Registrum," p. 86, Cesta to Luciano, 11 Aug 1907; "Church records, 1863–1915," *FamilySearch*, DGS 7857888, image 521. Their parents are not named. No civil marriage record has been located in Port Henry, nearby towns, or in the state.

41. Essex Co., Deed Book, 137:130, Domenico Cesta to John Cesta, 28 Dec 1908.

42. Essex Co., Mortgage Book, 63:579, Domenico Cesta to John and Filomena Cesta, 28 Dec 1908, *Essex County Clerk*.

43. Essex Co., Mortgage Book, 64:482, Carmino Cesta to John and Filomena Cesta, 5 Jan 1909. For Gennaro using John, see "United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6482), John Cesta, serial no. 1305, Local Board Essex County, Elizabethtown, N.Y.; NARA microfilm M1509.

44. Essex Co., Deed Book, 139:292, Domenico Cesta to Stanislao and Giuseppa Cesta, 28 Dec 1908.

45. Patricia Law Hatcher, *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2003), 26.

46. Essex Co., Petitions for Naturalization, vol. DR 33:4044, Stanislao Cesta, 1906. For Angelo's petition, see Rensselaer Co., Petitions for Naturalization, vol. 2:649, Affidavit of Witness Domenico Cesta for Angelo Pignuolo, 1905; "Petitions for naturalization, 1903–1906," *FamilySearch*, DGS 7785058, image 29.

brother of Giuseppa's father Angelo Migniuolo.⁴⁷ Angelo was Giuseppa's first cousin. Cervinara birth and death registries show many individuals alternating between the names Mignuolo and Pignuolo. Phonetically, the letters *b*, *m*, and *p* are bilabial stops, a type of sound made by closing both lips.⁴⁸

Angelo was close to the Cestas. In June 1905 twenty-two-year-old Angelo Penpignuolo, a US resident of eight years, boarded with Furtanto Cesta.⁴⁹ In April 1910 Angelo Migniuolo, resident of Troy from 1901 to 1907, returned to the United States from Italy, leaving his wife Filomena in Cervinara. His destination was the home of his relative Fortunato Cesta in Port Henry.⁵⁰ A few months later, a married twenty-four-year-old Angialo Pignura was enumerated in Domenico's Moriah, New York, household.⁵¹

No Fortunato Cesta appears in the village of Port Henry within the town of Moriah, Essex, in 1910. However, the couple Stradigliaso Cesta, fifty-eight, a railroad laborer, and Josephine, sixty-two, are likely Stanislao and Giuseppa.⁵² Their marriage of twenty-two years closely correlates with Stanislao and Giuseppa's 1889 marriage date. The census record confirms that the couple was only married once, supporting the hypothesis that Giuseppa was the unnamed, unwed mother of all Stanislao's children.

Also listed in the household were two sons, Gennaio, twenty-five, and Dominick, thirty-two. Gennaro and Domenico seem to have been enumerated twice. Details about their occupations and length of time in the United States correlate with the similarly named individuals enumerated with their wives on the same census.⁵³ Perhaps the two sons were visiting their parents when the enumerator came to the door.

47. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1883," entry 81, Angelo Pigniuolo. For Angelo Migniuolo, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1817," entry 51, Angiolo Migniuolo. For Domenico, see Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1827," entry 28, Domenico Mignuolo.

48. Sandra Paoli, "A short guide to Italian Phonetics and Phonology for students of Italian Paper V," (manuscript, University of Oxford, 2016), 7; PDF, "Selected Publications and Manuscripts," University of Oxford, *Romance Linguistics at Oxford* (www.ling-phil.ox.ac.uk/romance-linguistics/people/dr-sandra-paoli/publications-and-manuscripts).

49. 1905 New York state census, Rensselaer Co., pop. sch., Troy, ward 8, ED 3, p. 19, house 249, household of Furtanto Cesta.

50. Manifest, S.S. *Indiana*, 15 Apr 1910, list 6, line 20, Angelo Migniuolo; "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892–1924," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1400138, images 779–80.

51. 1910 US census, Essex Co., N.Y., pop. sch., Moriah, enumeration district (ED) 52, sheet 13A, dwelling 195, family 223, household of Dominick Cesta; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) microfilm publication T624, roll 934.

52. 1910 US census, Essex Co., N.Y., pop. sch., Port Henry, ED 52, sheet 13A, dwell. 197, fam. 225, household of Stradigliaso Cesta.

53. 1910 US census, Essex Co., N.Y., pop. sch., Port Henry, ED 52, sheet 12A, dwell. 187, fam. 211, household of Gennaio Cesta. See also 1910 US census, Essex Co., N.Y., pop. sch., Port Henry, ED 52, sheet 13A, dwell. 197, fam. 225, household of Stradigliaso Cesta.

Like cousin Angelo Pignuolo, Gennaro's brother Carmine returned to Italy to marry. In July 1913 Carmine, son of Stanislao Cesta and Giuseppa Pignuolo, both residents of America, married Anna Leparulo in Cervinara.⁵⁴ In May 1914 their son Fortunato was born.⁵⁵

Italian families of the time often named the first son after his paternal grandfather.⁵⁶ Neither Domenic, Gennaro, nor Carmine named their first sons Stanislao. Instead, Domenic and Carmine named their first sons Fortunato. Gennaro seems to have broken with tradition entirely, naming his first son Carmen.⁵⁷

Stanislao died in Port Henry on 8 January 1913.⁵⁸ He was buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery.⁵⁹ No probate was filed.⁶⁰ Giuseppa sold their property to daughter-in-law Catarina Cesta on 13 March 1915 and moved in with Domenico's family.⁶¹

Perhaps Carmine intended to stay in Italy, or maybe World War I interrupted his plans to bring his family to the United States. A list of soldiers who died serving Italy in the Great War memorializes Carmine Cesta, son of Stanislao, who died of illness.⁶² Cervinara records show that Carmine, son of Fortunato, died 27 December 1918, shortly after the war ended.⁶³

World War I also affected the Cestas living in New York. Demand for iron slackened after the war. Competitors from the Great Lakes produced and shipped pig iron more cheaply than operations in upstate New York. From 1920 until 1924, when the mine ceased production, the company reduced wages and laid off workers.⁶⁴ By 1920, Domenico and his family had moved back to Troy. His mother Giuseppa,

54. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio, 1913," entry 34, Carmine Cesta and Anna Leparulo.

55. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1914," entry 95, Fortunato Cesta.

56. Cole, *Italian Genealogical Records*, 57.

57. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1914," entry 95, Fortunato Cesta. For Domenico's son, see manifest, S.S. *Phoenicia*, 19 Jun 1903, list O, sheet 110 (stamped), lines 27–28, Caterina Martone and son Fotunato. For Carmine's son, see St. Patrick's Church (Port Henry, N.Y.), Baptisms, 1908–1923, p. 100, Carmen Cesta, 25 Jun 1911; "Church records, 1863–1915," *FamilySearch*, DGS 7857888, image 364.

58. New York, Department of Health – Bureau of Vital Statistics, certificate and record of death no. 1350, Stanislaus Cesta; New York State Vital Records, Albany. The informant was John Cesta.

59. St. Patrick's Church (Port Henry, N.Y.), Record of Internments, p. 9, entry for Stanislao Cesta, 8–10 Jan 1913; "Church records, 1863–1915," *FamilySearch*, DGS 7857888, image 641.

60. No probate records were located at the Essex County Court House in Elizabethtown, New York.

61. Essex Co., Deed Book, 152:211, Giuseppa Cesta to Catarina Cesta, 13 Mar 1915.

62. Italy, Ministero della Guerra, *Militari Caduti nella Guerra Nazionale 1915–1918: Albo d'Oro* [*Fallen Soldiers of World War I 1915–1918: Roll of Honor*], *Campania II*, 28 vols. (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato Libreria, 1926), 6:103; database with images, "Ricerche nell'Albo D'Oro," Istoreco – Reggio Emilia, *Albo dei Caduti Italiani della Grande Guerra* (www.cadutigrandeguerra.it).

63. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1918," entry 376, Carmine Cesta.

64. Patrick F. Farrell, *Through the Light Hole*, 110–23.

Table 1
Parents' Names in Cesta Children's Death Records

CHILD	DEATH	RECORD TYPE	PARENTS
Angela	30 Oct 1874	Civil death/Italy	Fortunato and Giuseppa Pigninolo ^a
Angelo	25 Sep 1876	Civil death/Italy	Stanislao and an unnamed, unwed mother ^b
Maria Rosa	29 Mar 1886	Civil death/Italy	Fortunato and Giuseppa Pigniuolo ^c
Carmine	27 Dec 1918	Civil death/Italy Military register/ Italy	Fortunato and Giuseppa Pignuolo ^d Stanislao ^e
Gennaro	20 Mar 1925	Civil death/N.Y.	Furtunato and Gioseppa Cioffa ^f
Domenico	1 Jan 1953	Civil death/N.Y.	Fortunato and Josephine Pignolo ^g

Note: Children are listed in order of death.

Sources:

a. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti [Register of the Acts of Death], 1874," entry 178, Angela Cesta; *Portale Antenati* (www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it).

b. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1876," entry 139, Angelo Cesta.

c. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1886," entry 49, Rosa Cesta.

d. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1918," entry 376, Carmine Cesta.

e. Italy, Ministero della Guerra, *Militari Caduti nella Guerra Nazionale 1915–1918: Albo d'Oro [Fallen Soldiers of World War I 1915–1918: Roll of Honor]*, Campania II, 28 vols. (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato Libreria, 1926), 6:103; database with images, "Ricerche nell'Albo D'Oro," Istoreco – Reggio Emilia, *Albo dei Caduti Italiani della Grande Guerra* (www.cadutigrandeguerra.it).

f. Bronx, New York City, death certificate no. 2102, Gennaro Cesta; Bronx County Clerk.

g. New York State, Department of Health, death certificate no. 57, Dominick J. Cesta; Town Clerk, City of Troy.

Gennaro, and Filomena moved to the Bronx.⁶⁵ While working on a construction project in the Bronx, Gennaro Cesta, thirty-nine, suffocated in an excavation cave-in on 20 March 1925.⁶⁶

65. Bronx, New York City, Supreme Court, Declaration of Intention no. 54954, Gennaro Cesta, 12 Jan 1923; Office of the Bronx County Clerk, New York.

66. Bronx, New York City, death certificate no. 2102, Gennaro Cesta; Bronx County Clerk.

An autopsy report for John Cesta identifies his parents as Furtunato [Cesta] and Gioseppa Cioffa.⁶⁷ The same parents are also recorded on his death certificate, which names no informant.⁶⁸

Dominick died in Troy on 1 January 1953.⁶⁹ His daughter Josephine, who was born in 1904, named his parents as Fortunato Cesta and Josephine Pignolo.⁷⁰ Josephine's paternal grandmother lived with her son's family and probably talked about the husband she called Fortunato.

Domenico, Gennaro, and Carmine were not the only children of Stanislao to die as the sons and daughters of Fortunato. See table 1. Although the deaths span nearly eighty years across two continents, the father of Stanislao's six children, save Angelo, was identified as Fortunato. In Italy, neighbors often reported deaths.⁷¹ When family members or neighbors were informants, Stanislao sometimes became Fortunato.

When Stanislao identified himself to government authorities, whether in the United States or Italy, he called himself Stanislao. To register his children's births, Stanislao used his official given name. When those children died, the informants—friends or family—provided his nickname. Table 2 presents a list of documents correlating the two names.

67. Bronx, New York City, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Case Number 246, Report of Death, Gennaro Cesta, 21 Mar 1925; PDF, "Gennaro Cesta Autopsy Report," Eva Holmes (evaholmes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Gennaro-Cesta-Autopsy-Report.pdf), p. 1; New York City Municipal Archives, New York.

68. Bronx, New York City, death certificate no. 2102, Gennaro Cesta.

69. New York State, Department of Health, death certificate no. 57, Dominick J. Cesta; Town Clerk, City of Troy.

70. *Find A Grave* (www.findagrave.com), memorial 107659946, digital image, 1 Apr 2013, by "Alysia," gravestone for Josephine Cesta Rea (St. Mary's Cem., Troy, Rensselaer Co., N.Y.).

71. Holtz, *The Family Tree Italian Genealogy Guide: How to Trace Your Family Tree in Italy*, 109.

Table 2
Chronological List of Documents Naming Stanislao/Fortunato

YEAR	PLACE	DOCUMENT	INFORMANT	STANISLAO	FORTUNATO
1849	Cervinara, Italy	birth of Stanislao ^a	Fortunata Cillo, declarant	X	
1873	Cervinara, Italy	birth of daughter Angela ^b	Stanislao	X	
1874	Cervinara, Italy	death of daughter Angela ^c	associates		X
1875	Cervinara, Italy	birth of son Angelo ^d	Stanislao	X	
1876	Cervinara, Italy	death of son Angelo ^e	associates	X	
1877	Cervinara, Italy	birth of son Domenico ^f	Stanislao	X	
1882	Cervinara, Italy	birth of daughter Maria Rosa ^g	Stanislao	X	
1885	Cervinara, Italy	birth of son Gennaro ^h	Stanislao	X	
1886	Cervinara, Italy	death of daughter [Maria] Rosa ⁱ	associates		X
1889	Cervinara, Italy	birth of son Carmine ^j	Stanislao	X	
1889	Cervinara, Italy	marriage of Stanislao and Giuseppa ^k	Stanislao	X	
1891	New York City	passenger list, Stanislao ^l	Stanislao	X	
1896	New York City	passenger list, Stanislao ^m	Stanislao	X	
1900	Cervinara, Italy	marriage of son Domenico ⁿ	Domenico	X	
1903	Troy, N.Y.	petition for naturalization, Stanislao ^o	Stanislao	X	
1903	New York City	passenger list, Giuseppa, son Carmine ^p	Giuseppa	X	
1905	Troy, N.Y.	1905 NY state census ^q	unknown		X

Table 2 (continued)					
YEAR	PLACE	DOCUMENT	INFORMANT	STANISLAO	FORTUNATO
1905	Troy, N.Y.	Troy city directory, 1904 and 1905 ^r	unknown	X	
1906	Essex Co., N.Y.	naturalization, Stonislao ^s	Stanislao	X	
1908	Port Henry, N.Y.	purchase of home ^t	Stanislao	X	
1910	New York City	passenger list, cousin's US contact ^u	Angelo Pignuolo		X
1910	Port Henry, N.Y.	1910 US census ^v	unknown	X	
1913	Cervinara, Italy	marriage of son Carmine ^w	Carmine		X
1913	Port Henry, N.Y.	death of Stanislao ^x	son Gennaro	X	
1913	Port Henry, N.Y.	burial of Stanislao ^y	priest	X	
1918	Cervinara, Italy	death of son Carmine ^z	associates		X
1918	Italy	soldier memorial ^{aa}	unknown	X	
1921	Troy, N.Y.	death of wife Giuseppa ^{bb}	son Domenico	X	
1925	New York City	death of son Gennaro ^{cc}	unknown		X
1925	New York City	autopsy of son Gennaro ^{dd}	unknown		X
1953	Troy, N.Y.	death of son Domenico ^{ee}	grand-daughter Josephine		X
<i>Sources:</i> a. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita [Register of the Acts of Birth], 1849," entry 19, Stanislao Cesta; <i>Portale Antenati</i> (www.antenati.san.beniculturali.it). b. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1873," entry 124, Angela Cesta. c. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti [Register of the Acts of Death], 1874," entry 178, Angela Cesta. d. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1875," entry 205, Angelo Cesta. e. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1876," entry 139, Angelo Cesta. f. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1877," entry 196, Domenico Cesta. g. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1882," entry 200, Maria Rosa Cesta. h. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1885," entry 192, Gennaro Cesta. i. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1886," entry 49, Rosa Cesta. j. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Nascita, 1889," entry 182, Carmine Cesta. k. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio [Register of the Acts of Matrimony], 1889," entry 36, Stanislao Cesta and Giuseppa Mignuolo.					

Table 2, sources (continued)

- l. Manifest, S.S. *Letimbro*, 29 Apr 1891, line 497, Stanislao Cesta; "Passenger lists of vessels arriving at New York, 1820–1897," *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org), Image Group Number (DGS) 1027612, image 288; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) microfilm publication M237.
- m. Manifest, S.S. *Abatia*, 11 May 1896, sheet 3 (penned), line 54, Stanislao Cesta; "Passenger lists of vessels arriving at New York, 1820–1897," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1027822, image 729.
- n. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio, 1900," entry 19, Domenico Cesta and Caterina Martone.
- o. Rensselaer Co., N.Y., Alien Declarations, vol. 9:54, Stanislao Cesta, 1903; "Aliens declarations, 1854–1906," *FamilySearch*, DGS 7785056, image 904.
- p. Manifest, S.S. *Sicilia*, 1 Aug 1903, list 9, lines 10–11, Carmine Cesta and Giuseppa Mignuolo; "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892–1924," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1399064, image 385.
- q. 1905 New York state census, Rensselaer Co., Troy, election district 3, p. 19, house number 249, household of Furtanto Cesta; *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7364).
- r. For 1904, see *Directory of Troy, Watervliet and Green Island, Coboes and Waterford, New York* (Albany: Sampson & Murdock Co, 1904), 136. The *Ancestry* version of the 1904 directory is mislabeled as 1902. For 1905, see *Directory of Troy, [and Adjacent Areas]* (1905), 135.
- s. Essex Co., N.Y., Petitions for Naturalization, vol. DR 33:4044, Stanislao Cesta, 1903; "New York, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794–1943," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2880).
- t. Essex Co., Deed Book, 139:292, Domenico Cesta to Stanislao and Giuseppa Cesta, 28 Dec 1908; database and images, *Essex County Clerk* (www.searchiqs.com/nyess).
- u. Manifest, S.S. *Indiana*, 15 Apr 1910, list 6, line 20, Angelo Mignuolo; "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892–1924," *FamilySearch*, DGS 1400138, images 779–80.
- v. 1910 US census, Essex Co., N.Y., pop. sch., Port Henry, enumeration district (ED) 52, sheet 13A, dwelling 197, family 225, household of Stradigliaso Cesta; NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 934.
- w. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Matrimonio, 1913," entry 34, Carmine Cesta and Anna Leparulo.
- x. New York, Department of Health – Bureau of Vital Statistics, certificate and record of death no. 1350, Stanislaus Cesta; New York State Vital Records, Albany. The informant was John Cesta.
- y. St. Patrick's Church (Port Henry, N.Y.), Record of Internments, p. 9, entry for Stanislao Cesta, 8–10 Jan 1913; "Church records, 1863–1915," *FamilySearch*, DGS 7857888, image 641.
- z. Cervinara, Avellino, "Registro degli Atti di Morti, 1918," entry 376, Carmine Cesta.
- aa. Italy, Ministero della Guerra, *Militari Caduti nella Guerra Nazionale 1915–1918: Albo d'Oro, Campania II*, 28 vols. (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato Libreria, 1926), 6:103; database with digital images, "Ricerche nell'Albo D'Oro," Istoreco – Reggio Emilia, *Albo dei Caduti Italiani della Grande Guerra* (www.cadutigrandeguerra.it).
- bb. Troy, N.Y., Register of Deaths, no. 644, Giuseppa Pignuolo; Town Clerk, City of Troy.
- cc. Bronx, New York City, death certificate no. 2102, Gennaro Cesta.
- dd. Bronx, New York City, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Case Number 246, Gennaro Cesta, 21 Mar 1925; PDF, "Gennaro Cesta Autopsy Report," *Eva Holmes* (evaholmes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Gennaro-Cesta-Autopsy-Report.pdf), pp. 1, 3; New York City Municipal Archives, New York.
- ee. New York State, Department of Health, death certificate no. 57, Dominick J. Cesta; Town Clerk, City of Troy.

CONCLUSION

Tracing Italian immigrant laborers like Stanislao Cesta, who flocked to New York in the early 1900s, presents several challenges. Stanislao and his family moved from one town to another, chasing work that would pay enough for them to purchase property and own their own home. Local newspapers catering to an English-speaking readership rarely documented their lives. Some changed their given names and surnames to assimilate, thereby improving their economic and social prospects.⁷² While it is easy to see how Gennaro might become John, the connection between Stanislao and Fortunato is not readily apparent.

Evidence shows that Stanislao and Fortunato were the same man:

- Death certificates for five of Stanislao's six children name their father as Fortunato or Furtunato, while all six Cervinara birth records name Stanislao.
- Carmine Cesta's Cervinara 1918 death registration names his father as Fortunato while military records identify him as Stanislao. Both sources are official government records. The civil death registration was created the day of Carmine's death. The military gathered information about soldiers who died at home later, between the end of the war and 1926.
- Italians at this time often named their first-born son after his paternal grandfather. Two of Stanislao's sons named their first son Fortunato, not Stanislao.
- Upon his return to the United States in 1910, Angelo Pignuolo, a cousin and close associate of the family, listed his destination as Fortunato Cesta's house in Port Henry, where Stanislao then lived.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Stanislao was also called Fortunato. Against significant odds he survived infant abandonment. He had no parents, no siblings, no extended family to nurture and support him. Despite an unpromising beginning, he provided for his family as a father and husband, emigrating to the United States where they had a better chance to improve their situation and even thrive. True to his adopted name, Stanislao Cesta was a fortunate man.

72. Ran Abramitzky, Leah Boustan, Katherine Ericksson, and Stepanie Hao, "Discrimination and the Returns to Cultural Assimilation in the Age of Mass Migration," *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 110 (May 2020): 340.