

In the 1900s, Italy was not in good state. It was split, everyone turned against each other even though it was newly unified. After years and years of conflicts, Italy didn't seem to have gotten to a better place. On top of that, this fighting has burned through their money. Long story short, Italy was not a safe place to live in. The cost for a boat to the U.S. was going down, so many Italians took the chance and left, with little they had left. One of those people was my great-great-grandfather: Michael (Michele in Italian) Gargiulo. A part of the family decided on Cuba, ended up creating a coffee business. The rest of the family would eventually go to New York but the first to move was Michael, hoping to start a business to get some money so the rest of the family could come over. But he wasn't certain anything was going to work, like most people on the ship. He left in 1907 for New York City. The journey was rough and long but in the end, he arrived and found his way to Coney Island, which is where their real adventure began.

As the business started, and Michael started to make some money. Eventually, he got enough to sponsor the rest of the family: Giuseppa Palomba, my great grandfather Louis (Luigi) Gargiulo, and his two sisters Angelomaria and Teresa Gargiulo. At the time, Louis was 10 years old, while his sisters were 18 and 14. Giuseppa, their mom, took them on the boat to New York. The trip lasted from October 31st to November 13th, in 1911. It seemed that Michael had an apartment right near the restaurant, at 2909 West 15th Coney Island, while the restaurant was at 2911 West 15th Coney Island. What happened after they arrived is unknown, but the business continued to run, and the family lived together in the apartment for a while. My grandfather was born only 15 years after they got to the U.S, in 1926, on September 23rd. He lived his very young years peacefully, but something was looming over the horizon.

Only 3 years after my grandfather was born, the stock market crashed. It was a dark time for everyone, but especially the family. Their business was giving them enough to pay for everything, but their money got slimed because of the crash. The family ended up leaving their humble apartment, to live in what was going to be an office space for the restaurant. There were aunts, uncles, and cousins all cramped into this place above the restaurant, with only two bathrooms. The business continued through the depression, and once my grandfather got old enough, he worked at the restaurant as a busboy. The depression went on for 10 years, and my grandfather lived most of his childhood in it, being 13 when it was over.

After the depression, the family moved back into an apartment, whether it was the old one or not, is unknown, but the family went back to a regular life. After graduating from high school, my grandfather enlisted in the Air Force. Sometime after that in 1965, the restaurant was sold to another family: the Rusos, who ran the restaurant and are still running it today, at the same location, and the above offices are still there too. Whenever I'm up at my grandparent's beach house, which is near Coney Island, we stop by, the staff know who we are, and greet us warmly.

<https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/great-depression-history>

<https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/italian3.html>

