

Varni Family

Stefano Antonio Varni (1863-1943)

Stefano was born in Fascia, Italy on July 2, 1863. Stefano was a farmer in both Fascia, Genoa, Liguria, Italy as well as Santa Barbara, CA. And his father was a farmer. The 1940 census says that he had an 8th grade level of education. In 1884, at age 21, he married his wife Agostina in her neighboring hometown in Italy. Census records have him immigrating to the US in 1880, 1885, **1886** and 1894. Perhaps he was like many Italian immigrants of the era, called “birds of passage”, men who travelled back and forth as migrant workers, returning to Italy with money after the end of seasonal work and without a specific intention of remaining in the US. Records on FamilySearch.org do show that at age 22, he immigrated to New York on March 9, 1886 on the vessel Saint Germain in steerage (not 1st or 2nd class) and the 1900 census reinforces that he had been in the US for 14 years. He naturalized in 1902 at the age of 39. He spoke very little English and his whole family spoke Italian at home. From “*Antonio Brombal & Mary Varni*” book (copyright 2000) by Mildred Kist Brombal, we know that the family lived in an adobe farmhouse with just 2 rooms at the end of Rinconada Road. He farmed “30 acres located between Anapamu, Canon Perdido & Quarantina streets where the present Santa Barbara High School Peabody football stadium and field are now located. (One block equals about 5 acres)”. He did not own the land but rented it, and grew vegetables-corn, as well as peanuts and pumpkins for cow feed. Read Millie’s book to learn more. The 1900, 1910 & 1920 Census records document that he and his family lived at 1020 Canal Street, which became Olive Street in 1922. He outlived his wife Agostina by 30 years, and subsequently lived with his daughter Mary and her husband Tony Brombal, and then with his daughter Caterina at 427 East Carrillo Street, and finally with his daughter Angelina’s family on 426 East Carrillo Street (since torn down) . He died at age 80 years old in 1943. He had a brother who remained in Italy named Giuseppe, and as of 2018 Giuseppe’s descendants still live in the same house that Stefano and he grew up in. Gino, Giuseppe’s great grandson, is one of only eight people that live year round in Fascia, Italy (2018).

Maria Agostina Re Varni (1867-1914)

Agostina was born in Fascia, Italy on January 18, 1867, but her mother’s side of the family was not from Fascia. Her mother’s father came from a nearby town- Fontanigorda. We know this because in 2018 while researching at the parish archives in Fascia, Mayor Elvio Varni said that something in the parish records says that she and Stefano were *not* married in Fascia. Normally marriage is in the church of the women’s side of the family, so therefore the wedding was elsewhere. She married at age 17 and had her first child at 18 years old. Her first two children, Caterina and Angelina, were born in Fascia, Italy and the rest were born in Santa Barbara, CA. At age 26, she immigrated to the US seven years after her husband Stefano on the vessel La Bourgogne in steerage on March 13, 1893, entering through New York. Agostina and Stefano had 7 children: Caterina, Angelina, Natale, Mary, Lillie, Joseph, and Rosi. She did not become naturalized. In Mildred Brombal’s book there is some mention that in Santa Barbara she worked outside of the home; whether briefly or long term, it is uncertain. In 1914 at the age of 46 years

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old, she died of chronic intestinal nephritis. She was buried in the catacombs of the Calvary Cemetery in Santa Barbara but in the earthquake of 1925 the catacombs were damaged and then sealed up so that there is no real memorial that one can visit.

Rosa Caterina Varni Sarri (1885-1978)

Caterina was born in Fascia, Italy on June 4, 1885. She was just 8 years old when the rest of her family (parents and siblings) immigrated to the US while she stayed behind in Fascia, Italy. It was typical for a family to never come back once they left for the US, so they left one child behind who would be responsible to help her grandmother. 1940 census says that she had a 3rd grade level of education. While in Fascia, she married Antonio Varni in 1905 at the age of 20 years old and then had a son a year later. About a year after that when Domenico Stefano (Steve) was 11 months old, she immigrated to Santa Barbara with Antonio and her son. None of them had ever been to the US prior to that passage and they departed for a nine-day trip on March 30, 1907 from Havre, France on the vessel La Touraine in steerage and arrived at Ellis Island on April 7, 1907. Caterina never became naturalized. Edward Marini, her grandson, remembers that she had a green card and Rose Varni (Silvio's wife) would keep it up to date. Caterina started out on La Patera Avenue but lived many years at 427 East Carrillo Street in Santa Barbara, across the street from her sister Angelina. Those houses have since been torn down and built up with new development. She had three children in Santa Barbara; in descending order, Amelia born in 1909, Silvio born in 1911, and Margaret born in 1912. There are also records that show that she gave stillborn births in 1914 and 1918. Her husband Antonio died in 1923 when she was 38 years old, but she lived on until 1978 to the age of 93. She actually outlived all of her four children! She later remarried to John Sarri in 1939 and lived on Indio Muerto Street. After he passed away she moved back to East Carrillo Street, living alone and then moving into a nursing home where she passed away due to extended illness.

Antonio Giambattista Varni (1882-1923)

Antonio was born in Fascia, Italy on April 17, 1882. His father Domenico was 46 years old when Antonio was born. In Italy, from parish records we learn that his father was a farmer and he himself was a shoemaker. In the US Antonio was a farm laborer. Anselm & Pia Varni remember being told that he was very poor and that in Fascia, he had been an orphaned farmhand and was sleeping in the hay loft of Caterina's little house. In 1905 at the age of 23, he married Caterina in Fascia, Italy. The marriage record confirms that both of his parents were not alive at the time of his marriage. Two years later, Antonio and Caterina then immigrated to Santa Barbara, CA along with their son in 1907 (details under Rosa Caterina Varni), living on La Patera Avenue. The Passenger List shows that they came with \$40. In 1918 he was still "non-declarant alien" on his WWI draft registration, and on the 1920 Census record he is marked as an "alien". He did not ever become naturalized. Anselm says that he was described as a person who was fragile and not healthy. According to Adrian Varni, due to aggressive behavior and mental health challenges, Antonio's oldest son Steve at the age of 15/16, called

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the Sheriff and went to court in Santa Barbara and had him committed to Norwalk State Hospital in Los Angeles. Within a year, Antonio died at the age of 41 due to “general paralysis of the insane”.

Amelia Varni Marini (1909-1974)

Amelia was born in Santa Barbara, CA on December 13, 1909. Her parents are Caterina and Antonio Varni. She was the second born of four siblings, and the first born in the US. Her siblings in descending order are Domenico Stefano (Steve), Silvio Carlos Antonio (Barney), and Maggie (Margaret) Mary Varni. The 1940 census shows that she had an 8th grade level of education. 1930-1932 voter registration records show that she was registered as a Republican. In 1929, at age 19 she married Angelo (Babe) Marini, but it was not until eleven years later that they had their first child, Edward. They had two children; at around age 30 she had Edward on February 10, 1940 and at around age 35 she gave birth to Margaret on July 1, 1945. She lived with Babe’s mother Carolina and his brother Peter in the house on 2510 Hollister Avenue (later changed to De La Vina Street in 1954) for 22 years, but Babe wouldn’t allow her to move her own mother in when the need arose. The 1930 census says that she worked as a maid for a private family. She also worked as a waitress at the Top Hat Bar on the first block of East Carrillo Street. By the 1940 census, it indicates that she did not continue to do paid work outside of the house but was a housewife/homemaker. She lived her whole life in Santa Barbara, CA. Her father Antonio died when she was 14 years old, but her mother Caterina outlived her and all of her siblings. Amelia died in her home at 2510 De La Vina Street in 1974 at the age of 64 due to pancreatic cancer.

(Biographies provided by Sacha Marini, descendant)