REASONS WHY TASSO IS RELEVANT
From May 17, 2011 Email to Donna Madrid

In 2006 I contacted the priest ahead of time to explain that even if I were to look in his records for my great grandfather—Giuseppe Ferrea, who was 43 years old when he died in 1893 in San Francisco—our San Francisco records are sparse enough and my family's records sparse enough (with no indication of the name of any blood relative for him, not one), that even if I were to find a Giuseppe Ferrea in his parish records, I would not know it was him. So I indicated I'd need to take photographs and then study them when I returned to the U.S. So once I arrived there in Tasso, I went on Saturday to a number of neighbors near the church, explained the same thing, and asked that they please give me a warm welcome to the priest the next day. And then when the priest came on Sunday morning, the neighbors did introduce me ever so briefly to the priest as he prepared to enter the church to set up for Mass. He invited me to come to the sacristy after mass. I attended mass then went to the sacristy. There he was making an appointment for a young couple's marriage. I visibly placed my 20-euro donation in the basket on the table (I wanted him to know I was a serious researcher and a nice guy). When it was my turn, he asked me what I'd like to photograph and I requested permission to take photos of all of the births/baptisms between 1845 and 1855. He retrieved the books for all eleven years and it took me 55 minutes to take 297 photos of 449 births and baptisms that had occurred in the parish during that eleven-year period.

I am still analyzing and comparing those records, even now, five years later. I simply do not know whether my great grandfather came from Tasso. Among those photos were four babies named Giuseppe Ferrea, any one of whom could be my great grandfather. Those four I have since referred to as my "four candidates." I had gone to Tasso in the first place (in 2006) because so many others who appear in San Francisco with the Ferrea surname came from Tasso (a fact I discovered in large part because the Ellis Island passenger lists showed that those with the surname who identified S. F. as their ultimate destination came from Lumarzo, the community in which Tasso is situated, those Ellis Island records being from the 1890s and 1900s, even though they do not exist for the 1870s, when my ancestor arrived in S.F.). I requested permission to photograph the records for 1845-1855 because the few records in San Francisco that hint my great grandfather's birth would place it sometime between about October 1847 and July 1850. Those records are: (1) the 1880 census enumerated on June 1, 1880, which says he was age "30" at that time (meaning he possibly was born between June 2, 1849 and June 1, 1850); (2) the 1890 Great Register of Voters, which stated he was age 42 on the October 15, 1890 date of registration (meaning he may have been born between October 16, 1847 and October 15, 1848); (3) the 1882 Great Register of Voters, which stated that on the August 23, 1882 date of registration he was age 34 (meaning he was possibly born between August 24, 1847 and August 23, 1848); and (4) his May 12, 1893 obituary, which states that on his dath day, May 11, 1893, he was age "43 years and 10 months" (which would place his death between June 12, 1850 and July 11, 1850). My "four candidates" were born December 6, 1844; March 10, 1846; October 9, 1848; and May 2, 1851. Maybe I had struck out.

But as I studied the records and saw that many of the others in the records (with other surnames: Gentoso, Lagomarsino, Ferroggiaro) also went to San Francisco, I at least knew that I was onto something. And then, on my second-to-last day in Italy in 2006, I found in the 1895 death

registers in the civil records office in Ferriere a transcription of an Italian-language translation of a San Francisco death certificate from 1893 showing the death of a person whom I had been paying attention to for many years, not knowing who he was. His name was Giovanni Ferrea and he died in February of 1893, three months prior the May 1893 death of my great grandfather, Giuseppe Ferrea. And prior to their deaths they lived one mile from one another (Giovanni at "Six Mile House" and Giuseppe at "Five Mile House"). It seemed promising, at least, that if I could discern any sort of relationship between the two, then I'd know I had found the right town of origin. But over the years I had not been able to discern a relationship. But I woudl keep trying.

Then, also after my 2006 visit, I discovered a piece of information that shocked me. I found that my great grandfather owned a piece of property elsewhere in the City. I researched that property to death. He owned it with another man whose surname was not in the Tasso records I had. But someone who came into ownership of the property shortly after my great grandmother (Giuseppe's widow) sold it also was surnamed Ferrea (it was a young married woman's maiden name). And so I studied her family closely and learned that family, too, came from Tasso. So I returned to Tasso last year (April 2010). I arranged with the priest again to take photos, explaining that I seemed to be making progress. I arranged to photograph records on a Sunday again and hopefully another day, too, if possible. (He serves three parishes, so I know his time is precious on Sundays and he is spread out thin.) When I arrived, I handed to him a 96-page book of extractions of all of the names of all of the babies baptized during that 1845-1855 period, in the same format shown below in my earlier email. He looked at it, with its color photo of his church on the cover, nicely bound, and said, "Oh, this is not just your family, this is everyone." I said, "Yes, this is a gift for you."

He brought me back into his office and asked what I'd like to photograph. I looked at the table next to me and on top was a volume with no cover but the first visible page had the date "1605." I said, "Oh, I'll just photograph everything and study it and then it will be preserved and safe, too." And so for about four or five hours that day and about four or five hours the next-ensuing Wednesday, I took a few thousand photos of all 360 years' worth of births, marriages, and deaths for the parish. All records were intact. I have since studied them intensely. Among them, of all things, was one marriage record for a man who was not from the town but from way up north in Italy. He was just passing through and married there. His surname did not at all appear in the records, only in this one marriage record. And it happened to be the marriage record of the man with whom my great grandfather owned that piece of property in San Francisco. And, as to my "four candidates" I was able to determine with these records (and with the civil records in Ferriere, which covered the years after 1865) that three of my four candidates died in Italy (two as infants, one later in life) but a fourth candidate died not die there. And neither did his father, a man named Stefano. And there was an otherwise unidentified Stefano (Stephen) who appeared one time only, in one of the earliest San Francisco city directories. And he lived near the address that eventually would be that of my great grandfather. But this fourth candidate was named not Giuseppe Ferrea but Giuseppe Gio Batta Ferrea. Still could be him, but don't know. He shows up in the military registration records (available in Genoa), having registered in 1872. And his entry includes the word "America." My great grandfather married in San Francisco in 1874.

So the long and short of it is that maybe this fourth candidate is my man. But I just don't know for sure. The age is off (this guy was born on |May 2, 1851, outside the October 1847 to July 1850 window I would expect him to be born in. But perhaps his obit meant 43 years and 10 days, instead of 43 years and 10 months. That would be quite accurate.

In any event, I felt completely blessed and lucky and fortunate and every other emotion when I was able to photograph those records on those two occasions. I suppose the experience was like that for me because of the prior communications with the priest and the compeling story about the missing San Francisco records that made the Tasso parish records so indispensable.