

The Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts
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We answer to the

December 6, 1972

Mr. Filippo Cirino,
Serino-Rivotolli
Avellino, Italy

Dear Mr. Cirino,

On behalf of the Committee thank you for your help in our search for information about the early life of Sabatino-(Sam-Simon) Rodia. Since you are also part of a cultural circle you will understand our desire to have accurate facts about the engineer, builder-artist of the beautiful Towers of Simon Rodia in Watts. Watts is a small suburb of Los Angeles just as Rivotolli is of Serino. We are planning as soon as we can raise the money to send a copy of our film to the Circolo Cultural of Serino so that you may all see what a beautiful work of art a citizen of your community and our community has made for us all during thirty-three years of his life. However, since we are a volunteer committee, getting things done takes longer than if we were a paid organization. So please, dear Serinese, be patient.

We have received the photographs taken by Sig. Martone Francesco, S. Sossio-Serino, 83020-Pr.Av. Please thank him for us, they are truly beautiful photographs. Please ask him to send us an 8 by 10 inch enlargement, glossy print of the page of Sabato's birth registration in the Commune of Serino, (Mr. Cirino, will you please translate this page for us) and the same size enlargement of the street where Sabato Rodia was born, Via Piedicupa, No. 10 in Rivotolli. The arches of Sabato birth street are very much like the arches on his front Towers wall.

Also when we were in Rivotolli the priest promised to send us the information concerning Sabato Rodia's baptismal registration in the Catholic Church. Who were his God parents? Could you take a photograph of this page. Sabato was born in February of 1879. Could you also tell us something about Sabato's mother and father and his brother and sister. Their names and birthdates and when they left Rivotolli and where they went. Who did his sister marry.? Where did go? To America? Did they communicate with the family in Rivotolli once they had gone to America?

About Sabato Rodia. When did he leave Rivotolli? We have heard that he left before he was twelve (12) years old. Why did he leave so young? Did he go alone to America and who met him there. At what port did he enter America. Did his brother Antonio meet him there. Did Sabato go to America with his family since he was so young? Were other relatives already in America? Where did the Rodia family go with the small Sabato? Did they go to New York? Some place in Pennsylvania, or did they like the 15,000 other Serinese go to Patterson, New Jersey? I have written to the Italo-Americano Clubs of Patterson asking for information. If Sabato's family accompanied him to America, did they remain there, or did they return to Rivotolli? Did Sabato write letters to them? Does anyone have any letter from him, or any photographs of the young Sabato. Perhaps a school photograph, or a

first communion picture, or a family gathering before he left Rivotolli. Are there any photographs of his parents taken after Sabato left for America? Any pictures (copies of) that you can send us will be greatly appreciated and well taken care of as we are dedicated to the preservation of his memory and of his Towers.

Could you verify for us whether Via Piedicupa, No. 10 is the true birthplace of Sabato Rodia. By the way who has inherited this house? And how through the years has the house changed if at all. Has Maria Rodia inherited the house and is she a cousin's widow. We have pictures taken with her in the house. I was so sorry I had to leave before accepting her kind hospitality to come back and have coffee with her. Please give her our most cordial regards. I think it would be wonderful if the birthhouse of Sabato Rodia could be made into a small museum to commemorate this citizen of Serino-Rivotolli. We would send you duplicates of all the material in our archives. It would be a fine act of international cultural exchange.

Now back to Sam (Sabato) Simon Rodia and his early life in America: If his family went with him to America? and then returned to Rivotolli: with whom did they leave the young Sabato? did they place him in a school there (collegio) or did they leave him with someone (relatives?) and did he immediately start working. What kind of work did yhe do? Could Sabato read and write Italian? At what age did Sabato join his brother Antonio who is supposed to have gone to work some place in Pennsylvania? Did Sabato get married at an early age? where? to whom? Where did he live when he first got married? Did he write back home and tell them of his whereabouts and his marriage? Was his sister named Angela or Anita and did she come to America and did she communicate with Sabato? and how old was she when she left Rivotolli? What became of Sabato's mother and father? Were they both from the town of Rivotolli? Where did his mother come from? Did anybody in Sabato's family manifest any interest in Art? Who? Where? How? Were they all Catholics and was anybody in the family become a priest? You see, dear Mr. Cirino, we know so little of Sabato's early life and we really want to write a scholarly biography.-of this important citizen of Serino-Rivotolli-Los Angeles. Through our combined efforts we will continue to make the Towers of Simon Rodia internationally known.

Does anybody in Rivotolli know if Sabato ever became a naturalized citizen of the U.S.A.? Could you contact your friends in Patterson New Jersey, some of those many descendants of Serino, and ask them if there are any city records of Sabato's life there. I don't actually know if that is where he lived when he first went to America. When we have finished gathering the facts of his life we will send you a copy of all the information we have.

Please give our kindest regards to Il Sindaco, Sig. Prof. Constantino Sabatino, to your father who helped us so much, to Amoroso Amodio with a wish that he is now in good health, to Dott. Enzo Tedeschi, and to all the good people of Motel Terminio who helped us in so many ways and to the people of the City Hall of Serino.

We were not able to go back to see Rosa Rizzo because we had so little time. Is she a widow of one of Sam's (Sabato's) cousins. I believe she said she remembers Sabato but I think she is too young to remember him - Sabato would now be 93 years old - and since he left Rivotolli at such an early age - I doubt that she could have even known him. However, I was very grateful for the stories she told us about Sabato's parents. Please remember us to her.

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Under separate cover we will send a copy of the engineering test that saved the Towers. I think it will be of special interest to you and to Dott. Enzo Tedeschi.

If you care to answer in Italian, I have friends who will help translate.

In fact they have helped me with these questions which maybe will be of help to you in answering some of the information I am seeking:

Concerning Sabato Rodia:

Che mestiere facevano i genitori? il padre? la madre?
Quando parti il fratello per l'America?
Quando parti Sabato? a che età....anno.... Perché parti Sabato? per l'America?
Qui andò con Sabatino?
Con quale parente andò ad abitare?
Andò a scuola prima di partire per l'America?
La famiglia era religiosa? e aveva dei parenti preti?
Che lavoro faceva il fratello?
Ha mai manifestato interesse per l'arte?
Era un bravo ragazzo Sabatino? Oppure irrequieto?
Perché andò per l'America Sabatino?
La famiglia proveniva da Serino? Rivotelli?
Aveva altri fratelli o sorelle? e quali sono i nomi
Dove andò in America e qui lo incontrò?
Ha scritto mai a casa? A qui altro può avere scritto? Ha una lettera di Sabatino e potrei vederla?
Conoscete la donna che ha sposato?
È di dove era?
È quando si è sposato?
Conoscete la famiglia Calicurchio? Avete contatti con loro?
Conoscete la famiglia Pelligrino?
Chi è Immacolata Rodia?
Chi è stato il primo a parlare qui a Serino delle torri? e quando?
Conoscete qualcuno di voi che ha visto le terre?
Avete mai sentito delle torri da parte di Sabatino. ?

Recently the City of Los Angeles honored its Volunteer organizations with a program called SALUTE TO VOLUNTEERS and our Committee was among the participants.

With the hope that we can expect your valued collaboration in this work,

Sincerely yours,

On behalf of the COMMITTEE FOR SIMOR RODIA'S TOWERS IN WATTS,

Mae Babitz
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