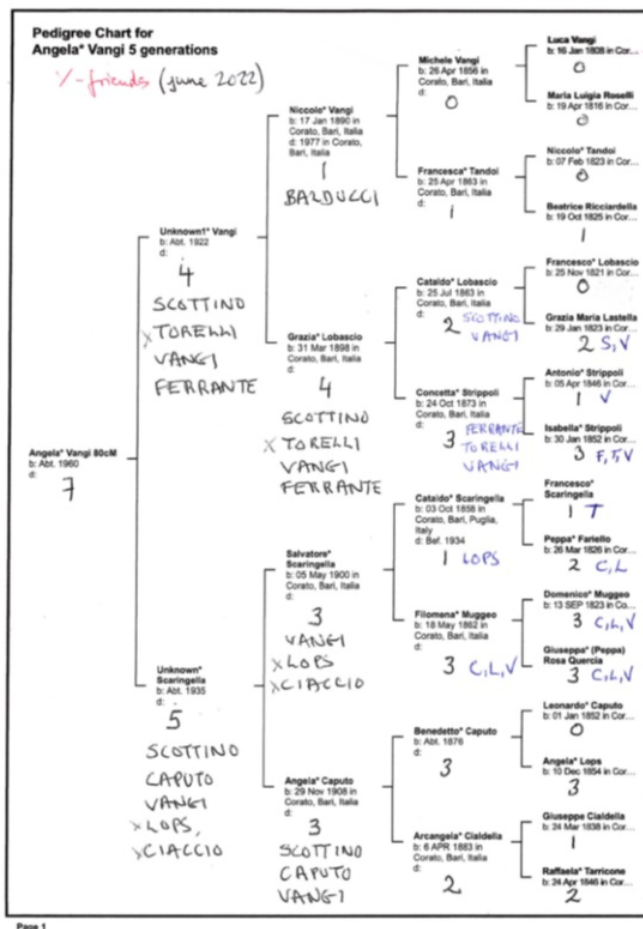


Continuing experimentation with Wikitree's X friends app, in the context of the Corato One Place Study

(full names of living people used with their permission)

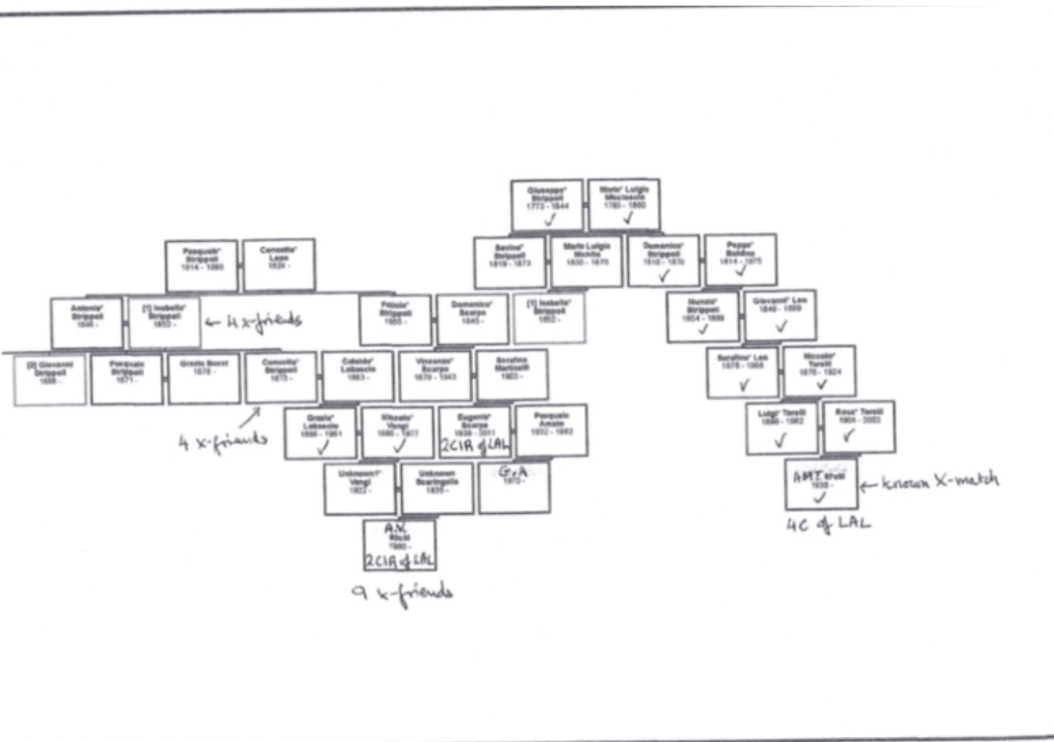
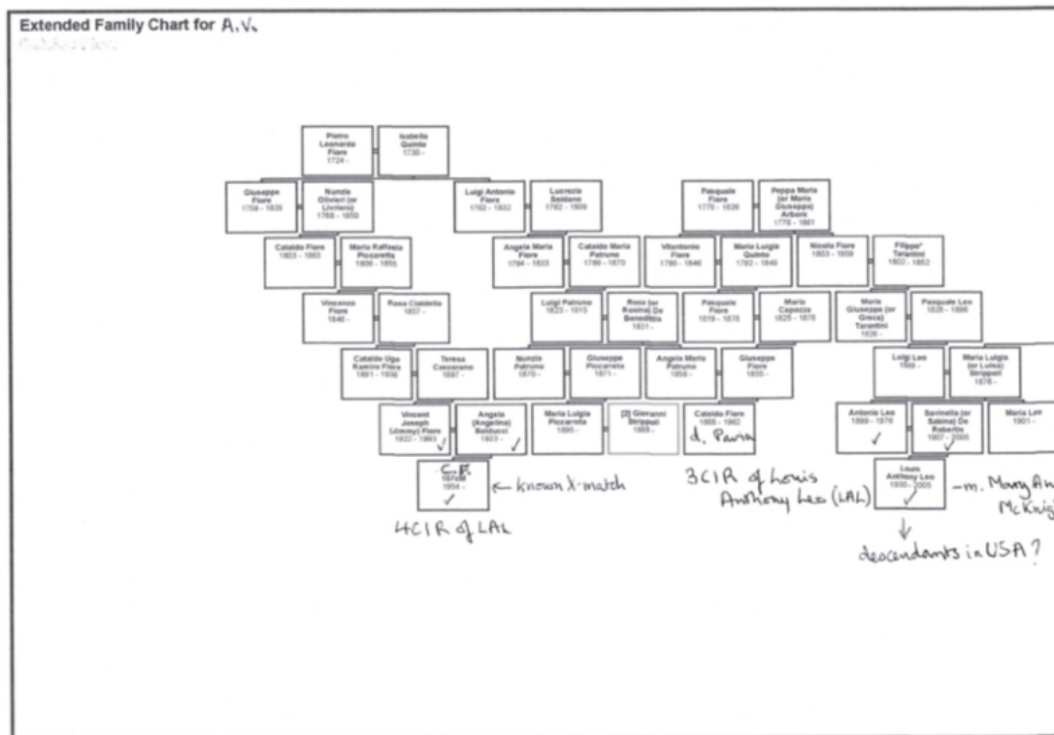
From the beginning of the work I did with Greg Clarke early in 2022 for the development of the X-friends app, I was using my search for my late friend Francine's birth parents. I had contacted Greg because there came a time during the research Francine and I did together when we realised that the endogamy prevalent in Corato would prevent us from reaching our goal, even with the existing genetic genealogy tools, because of the surfeit of cousins and namesakes that it produces. But she allowed me to continue the search in order hopefully to make it useful for other people with the same or similar origins, in particular when migration inevitably becomes a factor for consideration. After Francine passed in December 2020, her daughter Magali also authorised me to continue. So, in the experimentation with the Xfriends app, I still refer to Francine's genome.

In mid-June 2022, in the middle of the work with Greg, I merged several Excel files created from the .CSV files produced by the app. This resulted in the discovery that Angela Vangi (A.V.), born about 1960, carried 7 different potential X matches from various sources initiated from Francine's best autosomal DNA matches used as 'root persons', as well as a few known X matches¹. The 7 potential X-matches came from 4 autosomal matches from 80 to 107 cM, and 3 known X matches, all over 20 cM. Clearly, I could not ignore the significance of this. I produced a pedigree chart:



¹ 1 of Excel file : Xfriends – 16 trajectories merged – 9 generations2.xls)

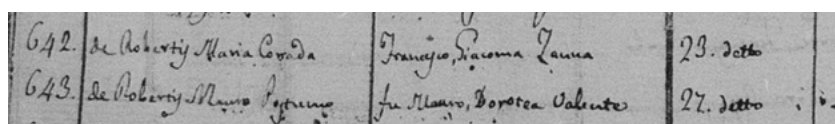
This chart showed that Antonio Strippoli and Isabella Strippoli constituted a promising couple for researching their descendants. By building down from this couple, I discovered Savinella de Robertis, wife of a 1C2R relation of Angela Vangi, Antonio Leo (see the extended family chart below).



Why was I excited to find Savinella De Robertis?

While Francine was alive, having obtained a special dispensation, we were able to access various registers at our local Departmental Archives in Marseille, the city in which she was abandoned. One of these registers was that of the admissions to the Social Assistance establishment to which Francine's mother had entrusted her. We discovered that she was one of the very few people that were admitted not by one person (usually the mother) but by two people: in this case, the mother, who called herself Maria Del Pretis, and a person who was identified as Madame Roberty.

At a later stage in the research, we discovered that the use of the long *s* was common in southern Italy, so that it was quite understandable that the employee who recorded the accompanying person's name could have mistaken de Robertis for Roberty. Indeed the following image shows that the *i* followed by a long *s* looks very much like a *y* :



But I also asked myself: why was it that Francine's mother was accompanied ? A likely explanation was that Francine's mother spoke no French. So it seemed plausible that she could have been English-speaking (or that she spoke another language of an emigrant's destination country, such as German) and communicated in her local *coratino* dialect (rather than Italian) with the person who accompanied her.

Just another hypothesis, you might say? Yes indeed, considering the large majority of Francine's DNA matches are American. Of course, there is a clear explanation to this : most DNA testers are American, and DNA testing in France is still illegal (although it is said that the number of French people who have taken a DNA test is well over 100,000).

Of course, it may well be that the large number of DNA matches from the US would be a common factor for every DNA tester around the world. However, it is also quite possible that Francine's birth mother was in fact an immigrant to the US who crossed the Atlantic in order to give birth in a country where she would not be recognised. So I've been working with this hypothesis in order to test the Wikitree X-friends app.

It is often said that when a mother abandoned her child, even if she wants to remain anonymous, she may leave a clue or two about her identity. In France, she told all the relevant official establishments that her name was Maria Del Pretis, born on the 24th of May 1904 in Pavia. She didn't mention Lombardy, but perhaps she assumed that everyone would immediately think of this province in northern Italy. However, all our research in the relevant archives in and around Marseille, and even our visit to Pavia and its surrounding area, did not enable us to come up with any possible identification of the person.

So when we found, after Francine had taken tests with both Ancestry and 23 and Me, that almost all her DNA matches were descendants of people who emigrated from Corato, we could only assume that her mother also originated from that place. In fact, having uploaded her raw DNA data to Gedmatch,

we also found that her mother and father were distantly related, which would have been common in an endogamous place, such as Corato.

So now to return to the present situation. On February 24th of this year, I processed the Xfriends app for a total of 18 people as root persons. 10 of these were Francine's main autosomal matches from 80 cM to 111 cM, 7 were known X matches (including one 87cM autosomal match), plus Leo-Savinella (Savinella de Robertis and her son Louis Anthony Leo), and Louis' father Antonio Leo's sister Maria Leo, born in 1901. With the resulting CSV files, I produced and merged 18 Excel files, resulting in an Excel file having a total of 7756 lines.

This time, Angela Vangi was the carrier of potential X-matches from no less than 9 different sources. This surely had to be the most significant result obtained with the X-friends app so far. What also changed from the first experimentation in June 2022, was that I remembered having seen a birth record of someone called Cataldo Fiore, born in 1888, with a marginal note mentioning that he had died in Pavia in 1962.

I then noticed that Louis Anthony Leo, Savinella's son, was a 2C1R to Angela Vangi and 3C1R to Cataldo Fiore. Close enough to be worth investigating, I would say.

I then made another discovery. Louis Anthony Leo was 2C1R to someone called Eugenia Scarpa, the mother of G.A., of the Amato family (who contacted me about one year ago). It so happens that Amato was Francine's adopted surname. Amato is a common name, and her adopted father was from Ravello (Campania), whereas G.A. was probably born in Trieste, her family being originally from Catania in Sicily. Her mother, Eugenia Scarpa, was also born in Trieste, but she was of coratino origin. The coratini emigrated frequently, including to places within Italy, so some research will be needed to ascertain whether they are from the same family.

However, Eugenia Scarpa is 2C2R to Angela Vangi and a 1C1R of Giovanni Strippoli, who was the husband of Cataldo Fiore's maternal first cousin, Maria Luigia Piccarreta. Giovanni was the brother of Louis Anthony Leo's grandmother, Maria Luigia Strippoli; and the brother also of Angela Vangi's great-grandmother, Concetta Strippoli. These Strippoli siblings were the children of Antonio Strippoli and Isabella Strippoli, the couple I had earmarked for further research after our June 2022 experimentation (see above). Isabella was the carrier of the X-chromosome from 4 potential X-friends. So Pasquale Strippoli (1814-1880) is a direct ancestor of Louis Anthony Leo, Angela Vangi, and Eugenia Scarpa; and Cataldo Fiore is a member of their extended family, born in the same year (1888) as Giovanni Strippoli. So it seems quite plausible to pursue this research orientation:

- to discover the descendants in the USA of Louis Anthony Leo
- to discover the context of Cataldo Fiore's decease in Pavia
- to discover whether there is a link between the two Amato families (Francine often told me that she was convinced that her adoptive parents knew more about her origins than they would admit to)
- to ask Angela Vangi to upload her raw DNA data to Gedmatch to verify that she is an X-match to Francine
- to explore possible de Robertis connections in Grenoble, related to Savinella.

What about a new avenue for experimentation with the X-friends app? Greg mentioned he had contacted Jonny Perl with regard to DNA Painter, and remarked *"I was wondering if there was a way to marry the two tools together, but, because X-Friends is focused on Ancestors and the DNA painter attacks the problem from the opposite end - current day DNA testers - there isn't an easy way right*

now to do it". But what about comparing the X-friends app to Jonny's WATO (What are the odds) app? It's true that WATO, like DNA painter, looks at the present-day autosomal matches...but so does the X-Friends app, adding living X-friends as an alternative reference, in conjunction with the subject's autosomal matches (ie DNA testers) used as root persons. It seems to me that one of the advantages of the X-friends app is that you can use any living individual as a root person, whether or not he or she has taken a DNA test.

Finally, to put you in the picture about the Corato One Place Study. It aims to be the American component of a project set up to promote the writing of the history of emigration from Corato. This project, entitled 'A tale of two twinned cities : Corato and Grenoble', uses genealogical research to help the descendants of emigrants find their origins and hopefully provide testimony of their family's migration experience.

For example, the local *coratino* historian Pasquale Tandoi wrote an article about an African-American GI called Cornelius Lynn who married the *coratina* Maria Nuovo and returned to the US with her, presumably to Kentucky. You can read about their story here :

<https://www.emigrazione-corato.org/medias/files/a-coratina-girl-and-the-afro-american-gi.pdf>

Would anyone at Wikitree like to follow up on what happened to them when they returned to the US ?

If you're interested, please send me a message !

Maria was the cousin of Dominique d'Introno, who contacted me in 2019 to find help for the writing of his own migration story, which began with the crossing of the Alps on foot at the age of 6 :

<https://www.emigrazione-corato.org/medias/files/dominique-d-introno-english.pdf>

Dominique would be glad to make contact with the descendants of Cornelius and Maria.