

## Salvatore Bartolotta of State Street

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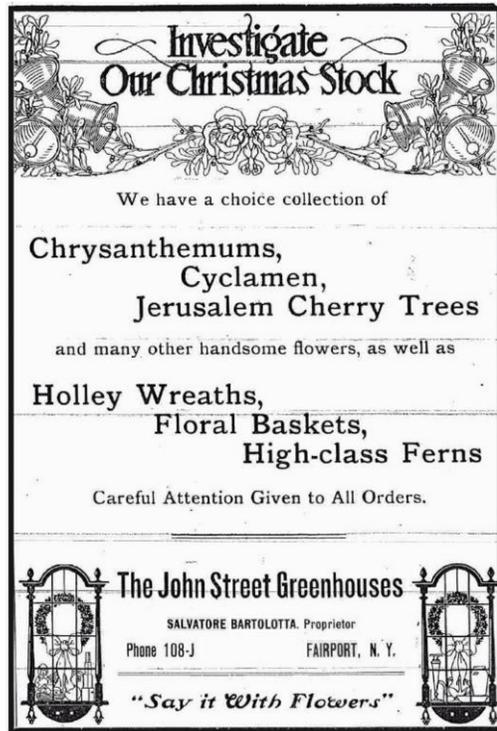
The name Bartolotta has been a familiar one in Fairport for more than a century. I met recently with Josephine Bartolotta, one of ten children of Salvatore and Rose Bartolotta, who were married on September 25, 1903, while still in their native Italy. Like many others, then and now, her parents came to this country seeking a better life for themselves and their children. Salvatore came first, in about 1906; his wife and two young children arrived later. The 1910 census indicates he was working on the railroad, and living with the Rizzo family on Railroad Street.



*San Sebastian Society members in the 1930s. The tall man near the center of the front row is Salvatore Bartolotta.*

The Bartolotta family soon settled at 49 John Street, where for many years they operated four greenhouses behind their home, selling an array of flowers and plants. Josephine and her

brothers and sisters worked in the family business, and recalls she and the other children spent a lot of time doing chores around the greenhouses, especially transplanting. Flowers for holidays, funerals, and the spring planting season kept the John Street Greenhouses busy. Customers placed their order at the greenhouses, or at a nearby grocery store, and a delivery service was also available.



*A 1922 advertisement for the John Street Greenhouses of Salvatore Bartolotta. The family home and business were on the site where the Fairport Electric facilities are located on Lift Bridge Lane. The street was formerly named State Street, and before that, John Street.*

In addition to being a successful businessman, Salvatore Bartolotta was a leader in the community. In 1915 he and a few friends founded the San Sebastian Society of Fairport. Salvatore served as the first president. In addition to the typical benefits of a fraternal organization, through the collection of dues the Society provided health care for its members, long before such insurance was common. The San Sebastian Society held pig roasts and dances to raise funds, and each summer hosted a festival, held on a strip of land between Roselawn Avenue and the canal. Entertainment, food and amusement park rides were featured, and helped to raise money for many charitable causes.

Albert DiRisio, “the hawk”, once recalled that it was Salvatore Bartolotta who convinced the Fairport Village Board to rename John Street to the more dignified State Street (now Lift Bridge Lane). Many have told me the change of names was especially appreciated by the women of the neighborhood. Salvatore Bartolotta taught English and proper grammar to many newly arriving Italian immigrants. He helped them to navigate the process of naturalization and citizenship, and provided transportation to Rochester as needed.

A granddaughter of Salvatore, Christine McIntyre Donsky, recently spoke for many in her family and the community when she said, “We are all proud of the work he did to assist in the assimilation of the Italian Immigrants.”