



CHRISTIAN MCDOWELL

Place Genaology

MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

My family, the Banaszaks and McDowell's come from many home countries.

Banaszaks

(my mom's family)

- Italy
- Poland
- Ireland
- Scotland
- England

McDowells

(my dad's family)

- Ireland
- Scotland
- Germany

MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

For this presentation I am focusing on the Banaszak side (my mom's side) of my genealogy and also focusing specifically on my Nunny's background.

My maternal grandparents, Al and Carol Ann Banaszak both did DNA testing with 23andMe which gives me some interesting details of family genealogy.



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

My maternal grandfather

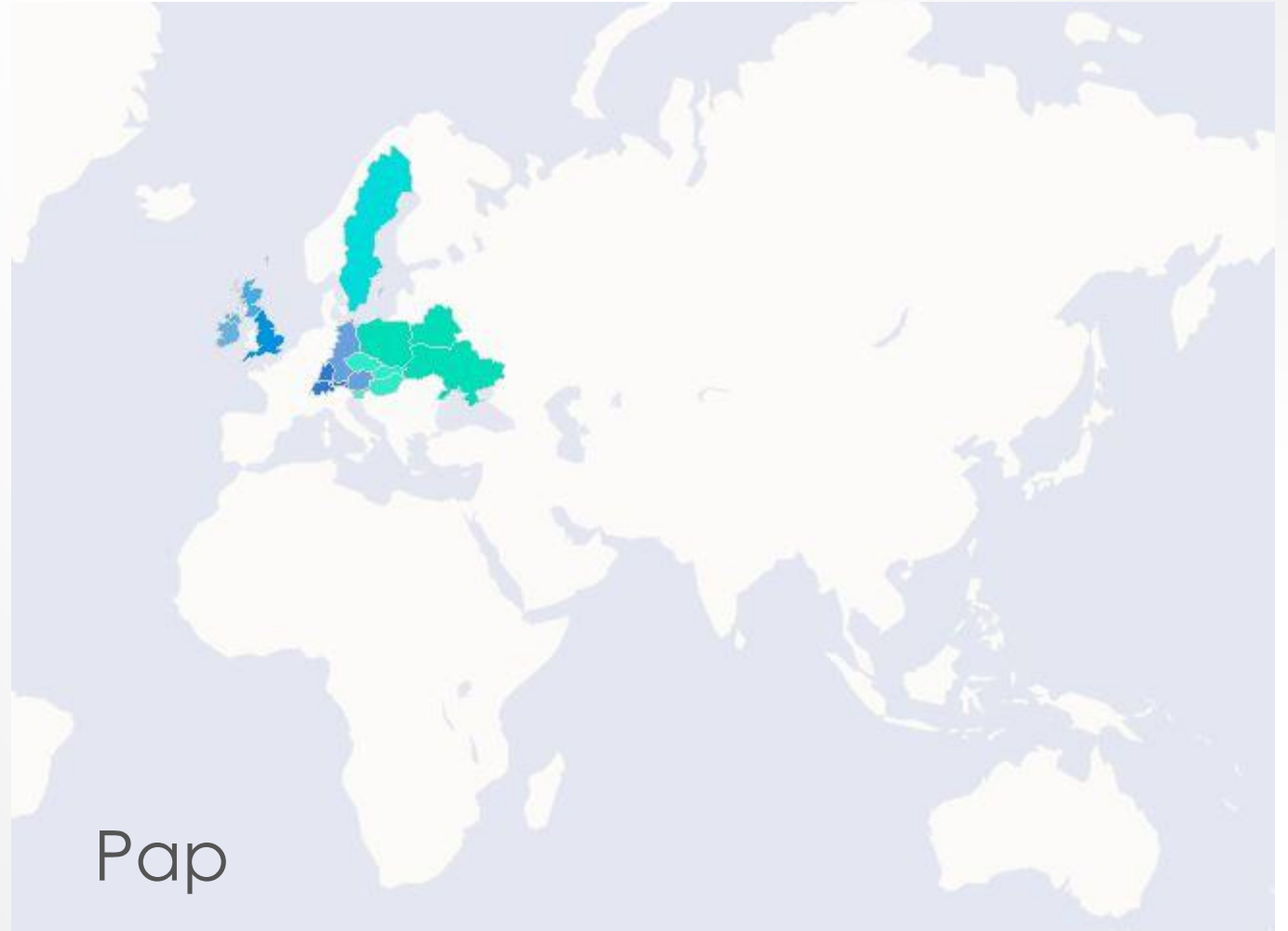
50% Central & Eastern Europe
(44% Polish)

33% Irish

8% Scottish

8% Swiss/Austrian

1% British



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

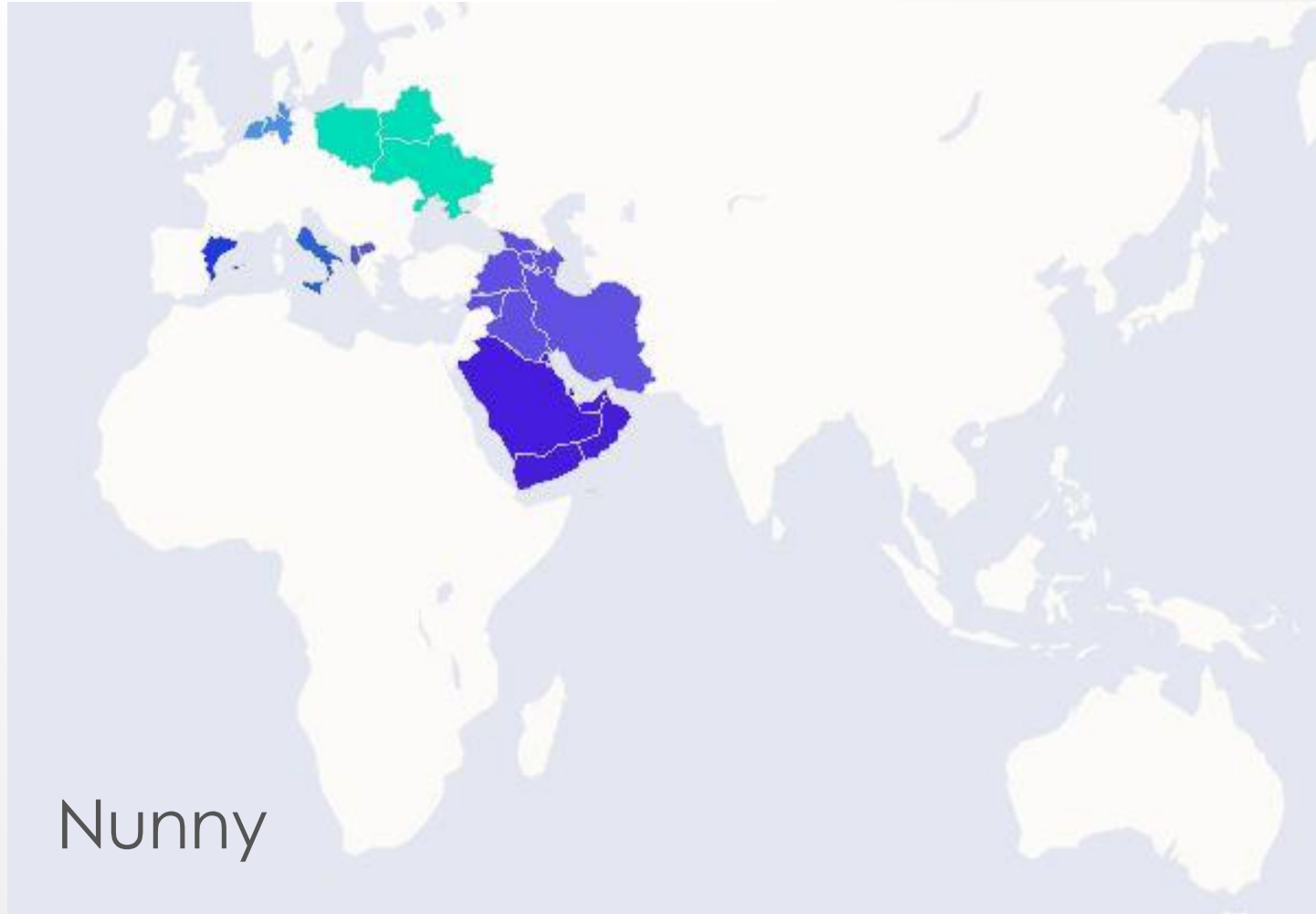
My maternal grandmother

88% Italian

9% Iranian, Caucasian, and
Mesopotamian

2% Spanish and Portuguese

1% Western European



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

My Pap's grandparents came to America in the late 1890's from Poland. At that time **Poland** was not its own country. It was divided by Russian, Prussian, German and Austrian and Hungarian empires.

They arrived through Ellis Island in New York and traveled to the West End of Pittsburgh because Polish immigrants went to industrial cities to work in steel mills, mines, factories, and railroads.

Lots of Polish people came to Pennsylvania because of work with coal, steel and iron. Around 700,000 Polish people came to Pennsylvania between 1870-1920 to do industrial work.

They couldn't read or write and didn't speak English.

MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

My Nunny's maternal grandparents came to America through Ellis Island in New York in the early 1900's and settled in Wilmerding, Pennsylvania. They came from **Montesilvano** in the Abruzzo region of Italy which is a hill village a couple of miles from the Adriatic Sea.



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

My great-great grandfather Dominzio Fusilli came to America first because he knew people who came before him to work at the Westinghouse Airbrake factory there. The whole town of Wilmerding was built around the factory and attracting workers to live and work there.

The Airbrake had about 3,000 workers in 1905 and made 1,000 sets of brakes a day that were used for making trains safer and more efficient.

My great-great grandparents had an arranged marriage and after a couple of years, money was sent to Italy for my great-great grandmother Eva (Yanuzo) Fusilli to come to America too.



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

Nunny's mom's family coming from **Montesilvano** is the side of the story everybody knew.

The part of the story that still seems unreal is about her dad's side. For all of Nunny's life, no one talked about who her dad was.

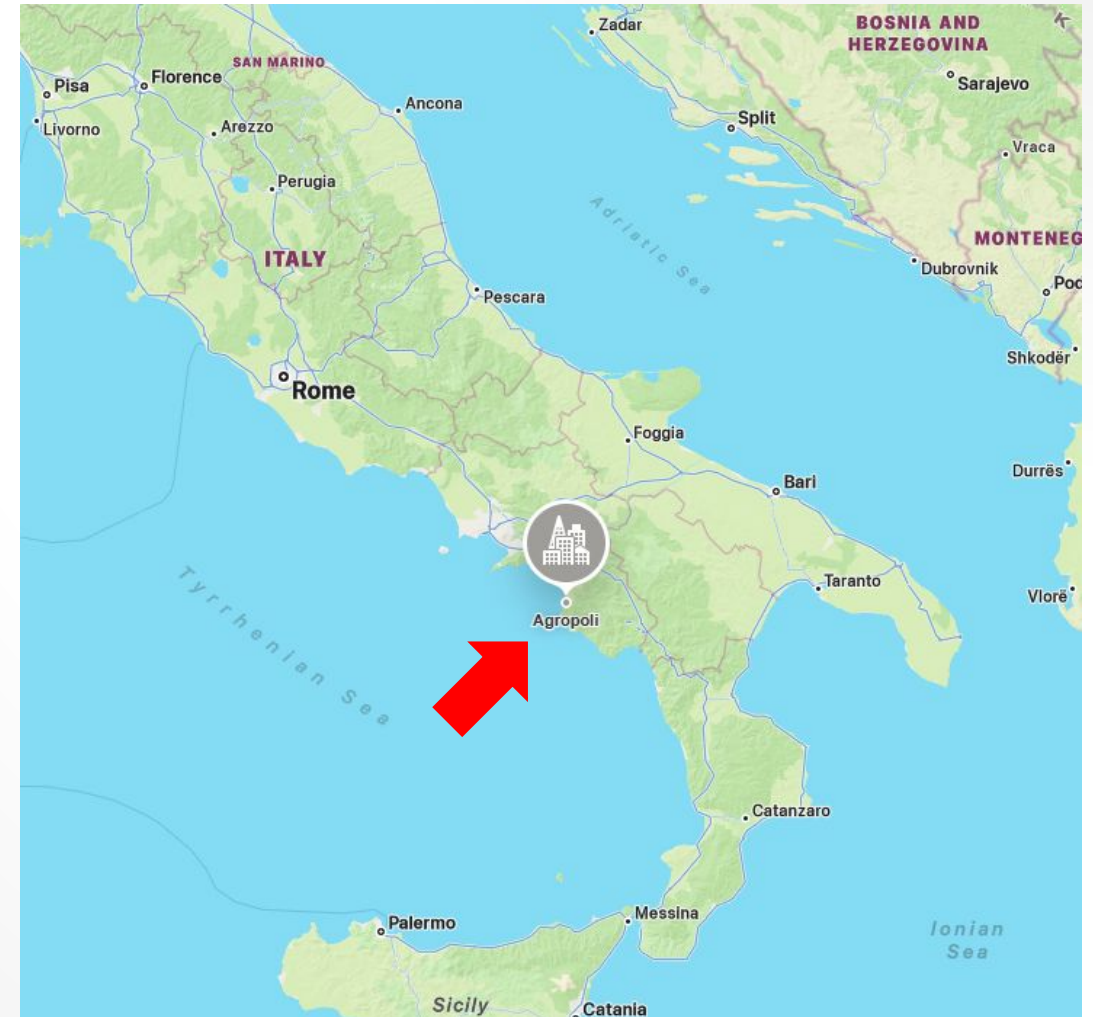
My great-grandmother Rosemary Fusilli, was a teen mom so everyone just assumed it was a secret because of Italian Catholic shame.

Then when Nunny turned 80 she took the 23andMe DNA test and found out her dad was a Volpe, and part of the "notorious" Volpe family that lived in Wilmerding, Pennsylvania.



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

My great-great grandfather father, Ignazio Volpe, arrived at Ellis Island alone in 1901 from **Agropoli**, Italy. He was one of many people from Southern Italy that came to America to escape poverty and no opportunity in Italy. He settled in Wilmerding to work and live.



MY FAMILY PLACE GENEALOGY

By 1920, the whole family, the mother Rose and eight sons, came to the United States and Wilmerding.

They owned a “whole block” of houses across the street from the Westinghouse Air Brake.

They all started out in jobs at the Air Brake and railroad. By 1930 they were selling groceries and grapes and were also known as bootleggers and ran the “liquor rackets” during Prohibition. They also influenced and “owned” local politicians and the police chief. The Volpes were both loved and feared by the other people living in Wilmerding.

In 1932, three of the sons were murdered in a Mafia gangster hit. For decades the remaining brothers continued to lead the Pittsburgh Mafia.



Volpe Block across from the Westinghouse Air Brake



Interior of the Volpe's Rome Coffee Shop after shootings



10,000 people filled the streets in Wilmerding for Volpe funeral

MY PLACE GENEALOGY

When people talk about where they come from, they usually mean a country or a group of ancestors.

When I think of where I come from, I don't think about any of these places I'm not connected to or people I never met. Even my Nunny never met her father or father's family.

What I do think about is a person and a house that raised me and my immediate family, not a country. I think about my Nunny and my Nunny and Pap's house.

To me, my Nunny, and her house represent where I come from.



MY MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER CAROL ANN BANASZAK

- Nunny picked me up from school every day when I was little.
- She worked hard. She was strong. She was kind.
- She taught me to help her cook.
- She played oldies on the radio and we sang along.
- She told me stories and taught me about life and self-respect.
- Sunday dinners at her house were the best part of the week for all of us.

This is my genealogy. One woman and one house that built my family.

