

Maria Rita Zappelli



HOME STREET HOME

- Perugia's history told through its streets -

Morlacchi Editore

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Throughout the centuries, the duration of the fair varied greatly, but a cancellation was a rare instance indeed, and happened only in case of grave pestilences and during the French occupation. In the *Statutes* of 1279, Piazza Grande is named as the main site for the fair, and Borgo San Pietro for the animal market. The same document also lists rules related to the appropriate locations for the various stalls.

Until 1958 the main piazza was the site of the Fiera dei Morti, which was an unmissable event for any Perugian. After that date, the Fiera was shifted around to various sites: first Corso Cavour and Borgo XX Giugno, then the cattle market of Borghetto di Prepo (1969-1970), Via Ripa di Meana (1971-1972), and finally moved to Pian di Massiano, where it takes place today.

During the fair, other events and games took place in town: one was the Bull Hunt in Campo di Battaglia. At some point, this apparently took place in the main square itself, as a plaque dated 1790 (now in the cathedral's cloister), prohibits the show from taking place directly in front of the cathedral. Another was the Ring Tournament in the center of the square: knights on horseback would attempt to spear rings with their lances). Lastly there was a Palio, or horse-race, along the Corso. For this competition, the prizes were originally a silk or velvet *palio* (i.e. a precious decorated cloth) for the winner, a hunting falcon for the runner-up, a *porchetta* (the ubiquitous Perugian stuffed pork roast) and a basket of bread for the third, but more precious prizes were offered in later times.

PIAZZA GRIMANA

Facing the Etruscan Arch

Previously known as Pianello del Borgo.

Currently known as Piazza Fortebraccio.

Although the name was officially changed in 1871 (first to Piazza dell'Arco Etrusco, Etruscan Arch Square, then to Piazza Fortebraccio), the Perugians (and foreign "temporary citizens") still call it Piazza Grimana.

Cardinal Marino Grimani (Venice c.1488-Rome 1546), papal legate to Perugia from 1535, decided a year after his appointment to restore this area. The square was at that time divided by a deep ditch, and Borgo Sant'Angelo could only be reached from the old city by ways of a bridge. The

Cardinal had the ditch filled, and improved with new buildings the first part of the road going up to the Borgo (today's Corso Garibaldi).

Nevertheless, the square was of little interest until the eighteenth century, with the building of the imposing Gallenga Stuart palace between 1740 and 1758, on a commission by the Antinori family. The palace was designed by the Roman architect Francesco Bianchi, with Pietro Carattoli as head of building operations. Later, it was owned by the Gallenga Stuart family and, in 1926, Romeo Gallenga donated it to the city at the condition that it be used for educational purposes. This led to the founding of the Italian University for Foreigners, which initially bore the more cumbersome name of "National Institute for Secondary Education, Specialized Structure." The idea came from Astorre Lupattelli, former tutor of the Gallenga family, who had begun organizing courses in Italian language and culture in 1921, using the halls of the main university and the Sala dei Notari.

For years, the back part of the building remained unfinished, until it was enlarged and completed in 1938 thanks to a healthy donation (\$100,000 in 1931) by the American Count Frederic Thorne Rieder, alumnus of the school and honorary citizen of Perugia.

The square was further worked on in the 1900s: first of all, the houses hugging the side towers of the Arch were demolished (traces can still be seen where the rooftops touched the ancient stones) then, in 1906, Via Battisti was opened (then called Via Nuova), providing new access to the area. In 1939, a group of houses known as "La Spina," which used to occupy the area now covered by trees and a basket-ball court, was torn down. The initial project called for some building to complement the mass of the Stranieri, but the Second World War disrupted plans, and after that it was turned into a public garden.

The name "Spina" may have derived from the "House of Monte Spinello," a school for poor girls, opened here in 1819. It started in a "house known as the Holy Monte Spinello, having belonged to Sebastiano Spinelli, who in his will left a sum to be given as dowry to poor girls of the area of San Fortunato by instituting a Monte di Pietà (basically, an institutionalized pawnbroker)" (S. Siepi, 1822).

The old Church of San Fortunato, rebuilt around 1634, is set between Via Pinturicchio and Via Bartolo. At the front there used to be a portico, which was demolished in the nineteenth century.

Under the side of the Etruscan Arch stands the Tezia fountain, built in 1621 on a commission by Count Girolamo Tezii. Its source water used to spring from a well called the Campana, or Bell, just above, in the street which still bears its name. The sides of the fountain are carved with the design of two knobby branches, perhaps recalling one of the symbols of the Porta Sant'Angelo neighborhood.

"Piazza Grimana is where everyone meets.

Here come the farmers and the milkmen from Elce and the Porta del Bulagaio: the soldiers from their barracks in the former convent of Sant'Agostino, the men from Monte Malbe with their carts full of stone and lime." This is Catenelli's description of the square, as seen in the year 1900. Now most of that is gone, and the square is full of students and traffic: still a bustling cross-roads, but more cars than anything else.

Some of the shops around the square are over a century old, even if they may have changed management and name. The pharmacy is just a few meters from its original site, under the home of Francesco Morlacchi in the old Spina quarter, where now there is a tobacconist, at the corner of Corso Garibaldi. The tobacconist, previously a drug store, belonged to the Bindocci brothers: "Everything could be found in their shop: cigars, salt, tobacco, matchsticks, letter paper, postcards, laces and shoe-polish, nails, paints, oil, petrol, alcohol.. on the front desk, between the accounting sheets and the scales, there naps a sleepy cat [...]. In the corner in front, the Café managed by Nazzareno Taburchi known as 'the Moor,' with its double entrance. Above the main entrance, towards Via Fabretti, there was is the sign for the 'Caffè del Moro,' with a drawing of a moor with golden earrings. The coffee used to be made on a Moka machine, over a bed of coals, and served with pastry made by the local bakery" (L. Catenelli, 1987).

VIA IDALIA

Sidestreet of Via Pinturicchio

A street with a very mysterious name: Idalia was a term used to refer to Venus, deriving from Ida, the ancient name of a holy mountain in Crete, sacred to

the goddess of love. That tells us nothing, however, about the connection with this corner of Perugia.

Perhaps the name has something to do with the fact that, in Etruscan, the word means "to divide"—as in "Idi" for the middle of the month—and Via Idalia is a cross-road of via Muzia (or Mozza), which means more or less the same thing (from "Mozza," cut in half). Whether this is significant or not, we cannot be sure.

For a long time, until the year 1860, at the end of the road there was a small opening cut in the medieval wall, known as Porta di San Tommaso from the name of the nearby monastery.

VIALE INDIPENDENZA Independence Road

Piazza Italia → Corso Cavour

Previously known as Viale dell'Alberata (Tree-Lined Road) and Viale Carlo Alberto.

"Thus named because it rose over the remains of the Pauline Fortress after the Nation achieved independence" (from the *Corriere dell'Umbria*, 16 December 1871). It is a long road winding uphill from the Church of Sant'Ercolano to the gardens in Piazza Italia. The quaint "medieval" house facing the gardens, between Via Masi and Via Podiani, is an architectural *divertissement*, a "fake" dated 1922, designed by Ugo Tarchi.

In June 1944, a section of street under the Hotel Brufani was destroyed by the German artillery as the soldiers fled the city, the purpose being to damage the electric wiring under the road. On the same day, Via Battisti and the Crocevia were blown up as well, in the hopes of deterring the Allies' advance.

VIALE INNAMORATI

Piazza dell'Università → Via Vecchi

Formerly Via Elce di Sopra.

Named for Francesco Innamorati (Perugia 1853-1923), encyclopedic intellect and brilliant orator, a lawyer, teacher of criminal law, rector of the university and member of parliament. He was also called to take part in the Commission for the Reform of the Criminal Procedures Code.

This street, along with Via Vecchi, constituted the old Upper Elce Road that went as far as the Elce customs barrier, half of which is today a pizzeria.