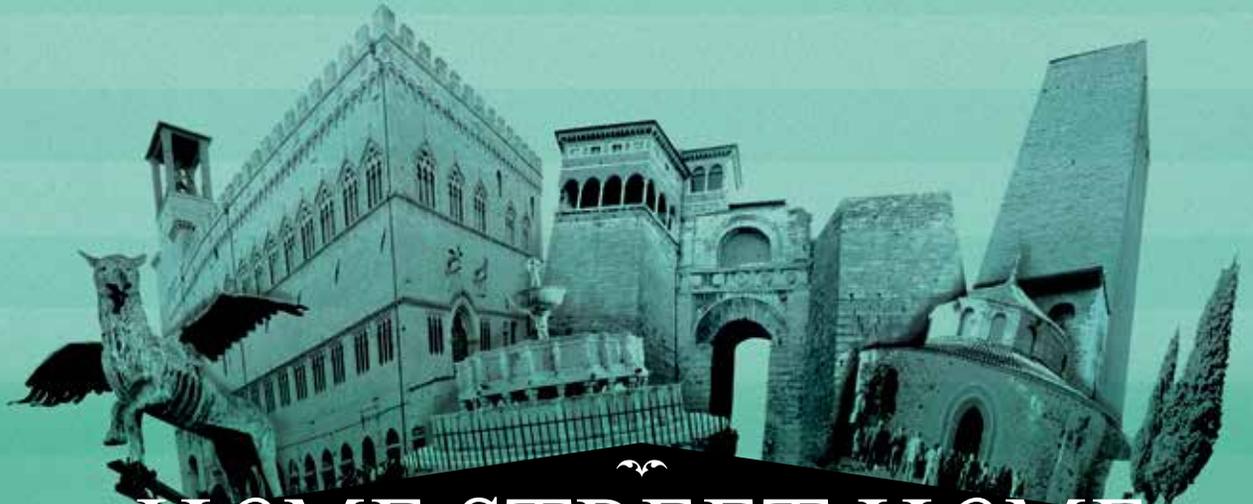


Maria Rita Zappelli



# HOME STREET HOME

*- Perugia's history told through its streets -*

Morlacchi Editore

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imposing Palazzo Cesaroni, architectural symbol of the strength of the new urban bourgeoisie. It was designed by the architect Calderini in 1897, then built over the Monaldi family's old home. It was described at the time as "a truly grandiose and admirable work of sumptuous marble, speaking of the exuberant wealth of those who had it built to perpetually embellish their home town" (R. Gigliarelli, 1907). The richly-sculpted decoration was commissioned to Osvaldo Bindocci, while the terracotta reliefs came from the famous Biscarini-Angeletti workshop (see *VIA DEL LABIRINTO*). Tradition has it that rich Mr. Cesaroni was not content to flaunt his wealth in front of the aristocracy by having extravagantly lavish décor inside and outside the building: he needed an extra gesture to spite those who had ignored him...which is why the statues are poking their tongues out at you. According to others, though, the insult is actually meant for King Victor Emmanuel II, whose statue faces the palace. Throughout the years, parts of the building were variously used as the post office (1901), a first-class hotel (the "Palace Hotel," opened 1902), and a cultural club.

Palazzo Calderini, the first posh apartment building in town, was built in 1872.

The center of the square is a typical nineteenth-century garden, centered around the equestrian statue of the king, with a lot of car traffic on the outside. Just in front of Palazzo Cesaroni, on the street, you can see a section of the old tram line—unless someone has illegally parked on top.

The line used to run from the train station in Fontivegge to here, passing by Via Venti Settembre, Via Cacciatori delle Alpi, under the Three Arches of Corso Cavour and all the way up Viale Indipendenza to the Corso, ending its run in Piazza Danti. A side track ran from the square to the post office at the ground floor of Palazzo Cesaroni, and was used to carry the mail up to the center.

Behind the Prefettura, between Viale Indipendenza and the Brufani, there are other gardens, built in 1873 and dedicated to the poet Giosuè Carducci in 1907 (the year of his death). In the middle there is a monument to the painter Perugino, moved here from Piazza Umberto I. He gazes eternally at the hills he so often painted in his canvases. Other busts, scattered around the park, commemorate Carducci, Bernardino di Betto

(a.k.a. Pinturicchio), Guglielmo Calderini, Orazio Antinori, and Galeazzo Alessi.

"Of all the pleasant meeting places in Perugia, this is the favorite, and the most central: here, like the river to the sea, all the inhabitants of all the *rioni* converge during town festivals; the young and the old, of all walks of life, crowd the place, so full in itself of old and recent memories, so rich in divine gifts and earthly beauty [...]. From the long balcony, with its double stairway leading to Viale Carlo Alberto, the view opens, like an immense natural amphitheater, onto one of the most amazing panoramas in the world." This is Gigliarelli's somewhat emphatic introduction to a long and detailed description of all that could be seen from this vantage point. From his times to ours, the distant mountains and hills remain unvaried, but the valley below has dramatically changed. Here is how he described what we now know as Madonna Alta, Pian di Massiano and the *zona industriale*, writing in 1907: "As rolls of fabric upon the grass, the fields of wheat streak the green valley in long light-colored sections, the plain cut in neat cultivated squares, the hill-sides dark with vegetation, vines, olive groves, forests: to the distance the gleaming roof-tops of the Umbrian villages, clinging to the mountain-sides, against the green fields [...]. And here and there, scattered like cows upon a field, the stone walls of villas and country estates, and churches white on the hill-tops [...]. And the electric tram, full of people who just boarded at the train station, nestled under Montemorcino, leaves the Church of Santo Spirito and quickly climbs up Viale Carlo Alberto, in two long curves under this balcony: and the eye, following it, leaves the distant countryside to rest on the dark rooftops nearby" (R. Gigliarelli).

### ***VIA DEL LABIRINTO Labyrinth Street***

*Corso Cavour → Via del Canterino*

Certainly it is labyrinthine here, but no more than in other parts of the center: this lends credibility to the hypothesis that the name may actually refer to an *underground* maze of caves and passages, the existence of which is claimed by some elderly inhabitants of the area.

One of the buildings, at the very end of the street, is richly decorated with a "collection" of

terracotta pieces: this is the site of the famous Biscarini-Angeletti workshop, opened in 1870, which produced, among other things, terracotta decorations for the most important Perugian buildings of the time (Palazzo Calderini, Palazzo Cesaroni, Palazzo Bianchi, the Biscarini and Vajani villas etc.) as well as for many family chapels in the graveyard of Sant'Erminio. "Substituting stone carvings, light and easy to apply but more durable than plaster, terracotta ornaments were in wide use at the end of the nineteenth century, especially among the Perugian middle classes" (*Electa Guide – Perugia*, 1993).

### **VIA DEI LANARI** *Wool-Carders Street*

*Via della Torricella → Via dell'Asilo*

The Wool-Carders' Guild is one of the most ancient in town: in 1279, the Priori asked that the Umiliati brotherhood be sent to Perugia from Lombardy to bring their experience working with wool.

After being forced to leave the central alley called Rimbocco della Salsa (today Via Danzetta) because of the terrible smells their work produced, they moved to this side street, close to the city walls. Now as then, it is a steep, convoluted, dark and cramped little alley.

### **VIA DELLA LOGGIA** *Loggia Street*

*Via Graziosa → Via Tornitori*

It has been said that the street is so called because Ercolano Guardabassi founded a masonic lodge (called a *loggia* in Italian) here in 1828. The elegant loggia above the arch leads one to think that it had this name even before the lodge was founded. The name therefore assumed a double meaning.

### **VIA DELLA MADONNA** *Street of the Madonna*

*Via della Viola → Via Imbriani*

This street takes its name from a fourteenth century fresco featuring the Madonna with Child and four saints (among them San Fiorenzo) which was in a house in this street and in which, on 30 May 1617, there was apparently a miracle. As it happened this house belonged to the convent of San Fiorenzo, but had been acquired by a bricklayer, a certain Franciscan master. While he was renovating it to accommodate his needs, he decided to divide with a wall the ample space in which the fresco was located. When his assistant Camillo, who was erecting the wall, was on the point of covering up the Madonna's face, he was overcome by a great fear and fell from his scaffolding, stunned, succeeding only in communicating that the sacred imaged must be uncovered. When he came to, he



THE BISCARINI-ANGELETTI WORKSHOP