

Il paese di Silvestro Lega

Modigliana

ROMAGNA'S VILLAGES

PROVINCE OF FORLÌ CESENA

The remains of the fortress of the Counts Guidi called “la Roccaccia”, whose original building dates back to the 12th-13th century, towers over this town (185 m a.s.l., pop. 4,749) and its wide basin in the mid-valley of Tramazzo where three streams meet to form the Marzeno river.

History.

Until 1377 when it passed under the domain of Florence, Modigliana was the main residence of the powerful Counts Guidi, who dominated for a long time on part of the Tuscan-Romagnolo Apennines. Under the rule of the captaincy of Castrocaro until 1510, in 1837 it passed under the jurisdiction of the commissariat of Rocca, obtaining from the grand duke of Tuscany Leopold II the title of “Noble town” as compensation. In the middle of the 19th century the Church chose it as Bishop’s residence, thus contributing to the promotion of the cultural liveliness that charac-

terizes the town still today. It is not by chance that the Capuchin convent houses the prestigious Accademia degli Incamminati. In 1923 the town was finally included in the province of Forlì-Cesena.

Sceneries.

The old town centre is very nice and interesting and features meadows and a stream running between old restored houses.

To reach the town centre, you need to pass through the so-called ‘Tribuna’ (16th cent.), a strange building made up of a round keep, two bell towers and a small temple with a statue of the Madonna with Child.

The Duomo (piazza C. Battisti) houses the valuable painting ‘Annunciation’ (oil on wood panel dated 1533, by Francesco delle Querce), while the small sanctuary of the Madonna del Cantone contains the copies of four lunettes by Silvestro Lega (Famine, War, Plague, and Earthquake) whose originals are to find at the Bishop’s palace.

Mansions and Museums.

Palazzo Pretorio, located in the homonymous medieval square which was the centre of the old town, was first the residence of the Counts Guidi and then, after 1377, the seat of the podestà sent by Florence. Today it houses on the upper floors the “Silvestro Lega” Town’s Picture Gallery containing works by Silvestro Lega, donations and a section with works by various artists. The Don Giovanni Verità Civic Museum located in the house where once the homonymous ‘Carbonaro’ priest and patriot (1807-85) lived is, on the other hand, dedicated to the Risorgimento. In addition to nineteenth-century relics and other interesting pieces, it also contains an archaeological section and a room dedicated to the Resistance.

Surrounding area.

On the outskirts of the town along the road leading to Faenza, there is the ‘ponte della Signora’ or ‘ponte di S. Donato’ bridge, a beautiful eighteenth-century humpback bridge with three arches, which is very high in the centre.



FAMOUS PEOPLE:

Don Giovanni Verità (1807 - 1885) priest and patriot

Silvestro Lega (1826 - 1895) impressionist painter

Pia Tassinari (1903 - 1995) opera singer

TYPICAL PRODUCTS:

- * *Cappelletti, passatelli, tortelli and tagliatelle*
- * *Raw olive oil*
- * *Casatella cheese, Raviggliolo cheese, Ewe's cheese*
- * *Romagnola Beef Cattle*
- * *Rocca dei Guidi chocolate cake*
- * *Sangiovese wine*

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Fortress of the Counts Guidi called “Roccaccia”

The original building dates back to the 12th-13th century, when Modigliana was dominated by the Counts Guidi.

It was probably built on a pre-existing late medieval building, of which only a few elements still remain that do not allow us to guess its aspect and size.

It is an imposing structure, whose eastern side, which can be seen from the road leading to Dovadola that crosses Mount Trebbio, is still well preserved. From that side, you can see a more ancient looking parallelepiped-shaped structure, which has been incorporated into the Fortress whose wall made of river stones is probably the original centre of the Fortress.

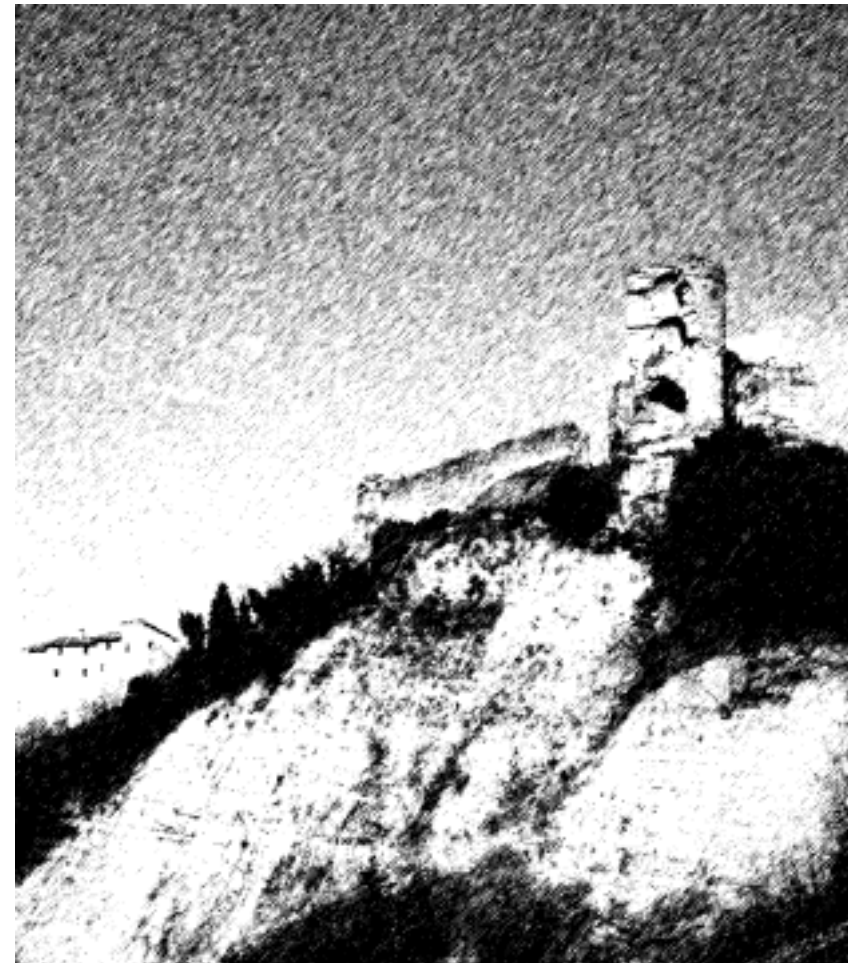
It was probably a quadrangular tower from which the more ancient and internal walls made of river stones started and continued up to include below piazza Pretorio. The beautiful round tower towering over the other parts of the walls and the smaller towers are built with “a sacco” walls, a structural building method that continued to be used until the beginning of the 16th century.

Today’s access road to the Fortress was built in 1912 to replace the older one that passed just below halfway between the Fortress and the Ibola torrent and that is no longer visible as it was destroyed by river erosion and landslides.

The western side of the Fortress is a very large and fascinating ‘cross-section’, showing the inside of the imposing tower formed by four domed rooms placed on top of each other. The lower room is still intact but cannot be seen as it lies underground.

The peculiar masonry technique, which was mainly used in the 15-16th century, allows us to guess the period when the Fortress was built.

The current state of disrepair is due to a collapse occurred in 1918.



Tribuna

Name traditionally given to this peculiar and strange building made up of two bell towers and a small temple with a statue of the Madonna built on a big semicircular keep. In the keep there is the main entrance door leading to the second town walls.

These larger town walls running along the Tramazzo torrent and surrounding the whole built-up area between the torrent and the Old town were built between the end of the 15th century and 1534, when the entrance keep was completed. Even though today it can be hardly read, the date 1534 is engraved in the stone curb at mid-height of the keep together with the name Cosimo Davanzati, the podestà that was ruling the town at that time.

Cosimo Davanzati also ordered that the coat of arms of his family – a lion rampant – was carved in the rock above the door under the above-mentioned inscription. Above this coat of arms there is the one of the Medici family, that is the lords of Florence, as symbol of the power of the ruling town.

In the bell tower on the right there is a clock built by Domenico Cavina in 1845. Previously there was there an older clock mentioned in several documents since the 16th century.

The statue of the Madonna was sculpted by Clemente Molli from Bologna and was placed there in 1678 with an aedicule as protection. The bell tower on the left was built in the second half of the 18th century simply for symmetry.



“Ponte San Donato” bridge



It is also called ‘Ponte della Signora’ and dates back to the 18th century. It is an humpback bridge with three arches, which is very large and high in the centre. It was built to replace an older bridge destroyed by an extraordinary flood.

It was called “ponte della Signora” (Lady’s bridge) due to its location next to the villa called La Colombaia owned at that time by a noblewoman. The name San Donato, on the other hand, was due to its proximity to a very ancient church dedicated to San Donato now disappeared.

Cappuchin Convent



It was founded in 1561 by father Lorenzo Visani from Fognano and father Bernardino Piazza from Modigliana in the place called “Castellano Mount”. The annexed small church was dedicated to Maria della Pace. The convent was enlarged several times until it reached its current structure at the end of the 18th century.

Today it houses the Accademia degli Incamminati, which has promoted its restoration. Under the portico of the church there are some tombstones of important people in the town’s history, such as the brothers Giovanni and Matteo Zauli, who in 1823 built in Modigliana the first highly advanced steam-powered spinning mill in the area of Tuscany and Romagna.

Inside there are several wooden altars in typical Capuchin style. On the main altar there is a painting by Mastelletta, while on the side altar there is a painting by Carlo Cignani. Next to the church staircase there is a devotional cave with a group of life-size statues portraying the Passion.

Piazza Pretorio

It is maybe the most beautiful medieval square in the province of Forlì-Cesena. You get there passing through the arch gate leading to the Old town centre. It is overlooked by several buildings, such as Palazzo Pretorio, a stone building in fourteenth-century Tuscan style which had been the seat of the Podestà since 1377. Today it houses the “Silvestro Lega” Picture Gallery.

The former church of SS. Sebastiano and Rocco (1560), once seat of the Piarist Fathers and today owned by the local municipality, has been recently restored and dedicated to Pietro Alpi, the founder of the most important local industry. Now it will be used as venue for cultural activities. According to tradition, in Palazzo Borghi, a building in late Renaissance Tuscan style, a famous ‘barter’ took place: story has it that, during his stay in Modigliana, Philip d’Orléans, claimant to the throne of France, had a daughter from his wife. It is said that the baby, born on 16th April 1773 and called Maria Stella, was exchanged with the baby boy of the warder Chiappini in order not to compromise the succession to the throne.

“Silvestro Lega” Town’s Picture Gallery

Housed in Palazzo Pretorio, the picture gallery was opened in 1999 and contains a considerable collection of 19th and 20th century paintings.

In addition to some valuable works by the famous local artist Silvestro Lega, it is to mention an interesting collection donated in 1959 by the collector Michela Campana.

One section of the picture gallery contains paintings acquired from the Fifties onwards during the various editions of the National Painting Award dedicated to Silvestro Lega. This collection includes valuable works by Plinio Mesciulam, Getulio Alviani and Concetto Pozzati.



Don Giovanni Verità Civic Museum

This museum was created in 1932 and is still located in the house where once lived Don Giovanni Verità (1807-1885), a famous priest and patriot of the Italian Risorgimento, who saved Giuseppe Garibaldi in August 1849 during his historical escape through Romagna by hiding him in his house.

The building still shows its original nineteenth-century structure, while the museum is divided into several exhibition areas, some of which are still arranged as they were when the museum was opened.

On the ground floor there is a section dedicated to the Risorgimento, which also includes relics and documents linked to the life of Don Giovanni Verità. There you can also see his bedroom furnished with Franciscan simplicity, which contains two famous paintings by Silvestro Lega: the portrait of Garibaldi and the portrait of Don Giovanni Verità.

On the first floor, where there was once the library, there is today an exhibition on the Resistance, which includes documents, images and some weapons and relics relating to the partisan activity in the area of Modigliana.

In one of two adjacent rooms there is the room dedicated to Pia Tassinari. Opened in September 2003, it is furnished with period furniture and contains a rich collection of photos, personal belongings and jewels of the famous local singer. The other room contains a collection of busts used as reliquaries.

Finally, the cellars house a small archaeological collection of local finds dating back from the Bronze Age to Roman times.



Duomo

It is the ancient Parish church of Santo Stefano in Juvignano of which only the crypt is left. It was dedicated to the martyr St. Stephen and was first mentioned in 892.

It underwent significant adaptations in the 15th century and the new resulting building was consecrated by Pope Julius II when he passed through Modigliana in 1506. Other works were carried out in 1756. The church was further enlarged and the interior was built with three aisles divided by big pillars according to the late baroque style. In 1859, following the creation of the diocese of Modigliana, the parish church became both the episcopal seat and the Duomo of the town. The steeple was built in 1764.

Next to the corner of the apse, there is the very interesting **Sanctuary of the Madonna del Cantone**. It probably dates back to the 15th century and was built to protect the image of the Virgin frescoed on the wall. Over the centuries it was embellished with several decorations and furnishings and today you can see there the copies of the lunettes painted by Silvestro Lega between 1858 and 1863, which portray the four calamities from which Modigliana was protected by the Virgin, that is, Famine, War, Plague, and Earthquake.

The **Oratory of Gesù Morto** dating back to the 12th century is also worth a visit. It was built in the crypt of the ancient Parish church and in the 17th century it was chosen as seat of the Battuti Bianchi confraternity.

Today, it is a War memorial and contains the graves of the diocesans. Inside the Oratory you can see the fifteenth-century painting on wood “Lament on dead Christ” portraying Christ laid down.

