



# CASTELLO PAPADOPOLI GIOL

dal 1192

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## THE HISTORY

❖ Villa Papadopoli Giol, better known as “Castello”, was built in the late nineteenth century by the Papadopoli counts in English neo-Gothic style.

The impressive bulk of the building immediately strikes the eye of the beholder, who is given the impression of standing before a real medieval castle, thanks to its tall crenelated towers with their *bow windows*, chimneys disguised by pinnacles and double acutely arched windows.

The side of the Castello that faces Piazza Nicolò Papadopoli and the local church is actually not the most important façade (the main entrance is in fact on the park side), but it is by no means less splendid.

To one side, between the building and the huge entry gate, the big beautiful fountain stands under tall plane trees, complete with three tiered basins. The largest, featuring four lions, each lying down and facing a different point on the compass, collects the water that spills out in a curtain and splashes from the two above, supported on a slender central column.

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## THE ORIGINS

❖ In 1427, the Venetian Republic repaid the war efforts of its Captain General Nicolò Mauruzzi da Tolentino with the promise of ownership of the San Polo estate, once owned by the Patriarch of Aquileia. At that time a small castle stood in the middle of the town, directly opposite the parish church, and probably dating back to the year one thousand. Unfortunately, Nicolò died in battle without ever enjoying the property granted to him.

However, in 1452 his son Cristoforo also came to the attention of the Serenissima Republic and, keeping the promise he had made his father, the Doge made Cristoforo the permanent owner of the San Polo estate.

The presence of the Da Tolentino family in the San Polo area, and the existence of a stronghold or castle of their ownership is still today confirmed by a single relic: an ancient coat of arms in marble depicting a lion rampant brandishing a sword, currently set over a door on the outside wall of the old stables, in the castle park.

In the sixteenth century, the noble family of the Gabrieli counts came into possession of the San Polo estate through an arranged marriage with the daughters of Lancillotto da Tolentino and governed it through various vicissitudes for the entire Napoleonic period. When, in 1805, the last Count Gabrieli, Angelo Maria, died intestate, the property and grounds first passed into the hands of the treasury of the new Kingdom of Italy and were then purchased by the Vivante brothers.



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## THE PAPADOPOLI COUNTS

The Papadopoli family were originally wealthy merchants from the island of Corfu. At the end of the eighteenth century, having moved to Venice, they founded a trading company and in 1821 were accepted into the Venetian nobility. In the lagoon city they swiftly became the richest and most authoritative figures of the period. In 1814, Count Angelo Antonio bought the land belonging to the former San Polo estate from the Vivantes, implementing a policy of acquisitions and investments in various parts of the Veneto region. His son Spiridione however was the one who had the first modest building constructed in 1850, on the scant remains of the ancient Da Tolentino residence, and this initial construction was later enlarged by his cousin Nicolò.

The Castello made the headlines in 1902 with celebrations for the fairy-tale wedding between one of the twin daughters of Nicolò Papadopoli Aldobrandini and his wife Elena Hellenbach, a Croatian baroness. At the age of 19, their daughter, Clotilde Vera, became the wife of Count Gilberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga. That day saw famous guests bearing marvellous gifts arrive in San Polo from all over Italy, including the one brought by Queen Margherita of Savoy.

Just a few years later, the Papadopoli family hit hard times, which forced them to sell vast amounts of land. In March 1919, Papadopoli Castle became the property of Giovanni Giol, whose first step was to repair the serious damage that had occurred during World War One, when it was used as a barracks by the Austrians and set fire to by a handful of Italian riflemen.

## THE PROJECT FOR THE CASTLE AND THE ENGLISH-STYLE PARK

Design of the first Papadopoli residence at San Polo was initially commissioned to Giuseppe Jappelli, the architect behind the Pedrocchi café in Padua; the result however was not appreciated by Count Spiridione and his wife, Countess Teresina Mosconi, the latter preferring to entrust the job to Francesco Bagnara, set designer for the “La Fenice” Theatre and a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts.

In San Polo, Bagnara designed a square building with a crenelated tower on each corner, set in a park of more than 12 hectares, which was also described in numerous sources from this period.

The obvious references to the neo-Gothic style, together with the ancient vocation of this place explain how come the name “Castello” appears on all the documents of the Papadopoli family that mention this building and how it has, over time, become a normal way of referring to it by the inhabitants of San Polo.



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In 1859, Count Spiridione, who lost his wife prematurely, died heirless and all his worldly goods passed into the hands of his cousins, the brothers Nicolò and Angelo Papadopoli. The former in particular, a Senator of the Kingdom, illuminated industrial and great patron, had always nourished a considerable interest in the San Polo estate, considered to be the feather in the cap of all the vast family properties. In 1868, this attention led him, at the age of not yet thirty, to commission a project for extension and reworking of the Castello to the German architects Ludwig and Emil Von Lange, father and son respectively. This project was, however, never realised.

Instead, twenty years later, in 1888, the project by the Turin-born engineer and architect Giovanni Battista Ferrante, said to be responsible for the addition of the two wings and adaptation to the English inspired neo-Gothic style, which was so fashionable during the *Gothic revival* era.

The incredible richness of furnishings and the numerous collections of works of art housed in the Castello, at the time aroused the admiration not only of guests of the Papadopoli family, but of all their art-loving contemporaries.

Unfortunately the devastation caused by the presence of the Austrian and Italian military during World War One led to the loss of all the furniture in the castle and subsequent reconstruction in 1920 did not succeed in restoring the interiors to their harmonious style coherence that gave the building that markedly neo-Gothic imprint so long sought by Count Nicolò Papadopoli.

## GIOVANNI GIOL



Born in Vigonovo di Fontanafredda in 1866, Giovanni Giol was a poor countryman from Friuli who in 1887, to escape the economic crisis, had emigrated to the Mendoza region of Argentina where many of his fellow countrymen had already settled.

Initially, Giovanni Giol worked for the railway company, then he started to sell wine and ended up by producing it. In 1896, he teamed up with Gargantini, who had emigrated in 1883 from Canton Ticino becoming the owner of vast vineyards, setting up *Giol y Gargantini*.

In just 13 years, the company's wine production went from 4 million litres in 1898 to 42 million in 1911. The various estates covered 8,850 hectares of land and the wine was stored in large cellars linked to each other with overhead *wine-ducts*. The company also had an adjacent factory which produced 500 barrels a day.





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The vast cellars that covered an area stretching for more than 5,000 square metres, home to the biggest barrel in the world, like the strange ancient-Egyptian style home where the Giol family lived, gave some idea of the business success achieved by this enterprising Friulian who in the end was clever enough to choose the right moment to move his capital from Argentina to Italy.

In March 1919, after World War One, Giol in fact bought from Count Nicolò Papadopoli the entire San Polo estate which covered more than a thousand hectares and took in most of the municipalities of San Polo di Piave, Ormelle, Mareno di Piave and Cimadolmo.

The price paid for the Papadopoli estate also included 80 farmhouses and the Castello with its park, which the family chose as their home.

All these buildings, heavily damaged by the devastating fighting, were completely rebuilt by a company specialising in “Reconstruction of towns devastated by the war”, to which Giol entrusted the entire project of all the building work.

Between 1920 and 1930, Giovanni Giol, having received the title of Commendatore, bought even more adjacent properties, until he owned about 3,000 hectares on which stood more than 180 farmhouses inhabited by 4,300 people.

