



CASTELLO PAPADOPOLI GIOL

dal 1192

THE ORIGINS

❖ Throughout the tenth century, San Polo is referred to as the “Villa”, becoming a “Castle” in 1192 thanks to construction of a fortress built by the Patriarchs for defence purposes. For centuries, the name “castle” was to be linked to the site on which this early fortalice stood.

At the end of the wars against Sigismondo d’Ungheria, 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. 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.

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,



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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 fairytale 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, in neo-Gothic Venetian style.

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, a Senator of the Kingdom, illuminated industrial and great patron, had always nourished a considerable interest in the San Polo estate. In 1868, this attention led him to commission a project for extension and reworking of the Castello to the German architects Ludwig and Emil Von Lange. This project was, however, never realised.

Instead, 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.



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During World War One, the Castle was used as a garrison for the Austro-Hungarian troops, who arrived in San Polo on 9 November 1917. The damage inflicted on the Castle by the war was restored in 1920 by Commendator Giovanni Giol.

The English Style Park has fortunately retained almost all its original beauty. The layout was both very ambitious and also original: the new style of English garden no longer a venue for parties and gatherings with lots of people. Visitors were to be guided in a more delicate manner in discovery of its real hidden treasure: nature.

The Castle itself, despite its magnificence, was hidden by woodland and by the 2 artificial hills made from the earth dug out to create the lake. Another beautiful element is the lake, measuring about 30,000 m². The ideal habitat for various species of birds, including migratory ones, and lake fish.

Unlike the gardens that had been so popular during previous centuries, romantic parks saw geometric order and obsessive symmetry replaced by irregularity and unexpected asymmetry, straight lines by curves, square walled-in fish ponds by sinuous little lakes with muddy banks, the flat uniformity of the terrain and architectonic terraces by gentle slopes interrupted with bumps and dips, the artificial jets of fountains and water effects by babbling brooks, small waterfalls and springs, and order by carefully calculated disorder.

Later, Count Nicolò Papadopoli summoned a certain Monsieur Durant or Durand, from France a very famous landscape gardener in the second half of the nineteenth century. He tasked him with “giving the park at San Polo a modern makeover”.

GIOVANNI GIOL



Born in Vigonovo di Fontanafredda in 1866, Commendatore Giovanni Giol was a poor countryman from Friuli who in 1887 had emigrated to the Mendoza region of Argentina.

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 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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In March 1919, Giol picked up the right moment to buy the entire San Polo Estate from Count Nicolò Papadopoli including the castle with its park that has been the home of the Giol family ever since and 80 farmhouses. Over the years that followed, the property was further extended to cover most of the municipalities of San Polo di Piave, Ormelle, Mareno di Piave and Cimadolmo.

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.

THE CASTLE AND THE PARK TODAY

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.

A flight of steps leads to the portico and its three arches on the main façade, which looks out over the park.

The side of the Castello that faces Piazza Nicolò Papadopoli and the local church is actually not the most important façade 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.

The park is an idyllic nineteenth-century visitor experience with trees that include many noteworthy autochthonous “exotic” species, such as Lebanon cedar, beech, oak, magnolia, liriodendron, ginkgo and many more just waiting to be discovered.

The colours chosen by Bagnara are totally natural, and the shapes are those of the water in the large central pool, the sky reflected in it and the great expanses of lawn with the many trees still surviving from the original nineteenth century layout.