

History of Cortona

"From a high Tuscan hill, fifty miles from Florence between Arezzo and Perugia, rises the equally ancient and noble city of Cortona. Before the city lays a vast and beautiful plain, it is flanked on either side by distant hills and valleys while behind it are towering yet fruitful mountains. Cortona has a picturesque aspect, quite a bit longer than wide, turned towards the midday sun. Her district is fertile and is abundant with all that is necessary to human life. It is Cortona marked by the Meridian-Antarctic star sign, feminine, in motion, pungent, earthy, frigid and dry and under the noble reign of..."

Map of the city by Pietro da Cortona (1597-1669)



This is the description of Cortona in one of the first known guidebooks, compiled by Giacomo Lauro and printed in Rome in 1639. In order to assist the tourists of that time, the guidebook was illustrated with a map of the city, an aerial plan line drawn by Pietro Berrettini. Berrettini was a Cortonese artist best known as Pietro da Cortona and his drawing lends prestige to this guidebook. (Berrettini's house is about 100 yards from Villa Cristoforo) That description is still valid after nearly four hundred years. Cortona has changed very little in its urban make up, it is still there - framed in the center of a triangle which has for its corners Arezzo, Siena and Perugia, three of the richest cities of Central Italy in history and art works. About eighty kilometers from Florence, Cortona is still a satellite of this city, remaining in its orbit nearly 500 years from 1411 the year of the loss of its independence as a free Comune until 1860.

Before embarking on a visit of the city (located 2,000 feet above sea level), it would be opportune for the tourist to be familiar with the essential threads of history which run through its culture and artistic treasures.

From the origins to the fall of the Roman Empire

The foundation of the city is lost in the mists of numerous legends of which there are traces going back to the classical era. These legends were elaborated upon and notably took shape in the late part of the Renaissance period under the rule of **Cosimo the First** (1537-1574).

Despite opposition, he set up a plan to achieve the following goals:

- **in regards to the Florentine ruling class:** to enhance the image of the Tuscan territory as ancient Etruria, not only for the antiquity of all its most famous cities, which dated back to the roots of civilization immediately following the Great Flood, but with the aim of obtaining for the territory and for the city the recognition of a Grand Duchy and the title of Grand Duke for Cosimo. This was granted by Pope Pius V in 1570.

- **in regards to the Cortonese ruling class:** to enhance the image of the city by presenting it as the **most noble and ancient** among the cities of Tuscany, which had enjoyed an autonomous social structure from the time of the Etruscan lucomonia until it was transformed into the free Comune of Medieval times. Placed in the context of that time, in which the relationship with the "Signori" of Florence who had taken over Cortona was bitter, this research into the Etruscan myths and legends in particular, gave the Cortonese ruling class the opportunity to reclaim some of the city's autonomy.

The guidebook from the sixteen hundreds by Giacomo Lauro, refers to some writings by Annio Viterbese (1432-1502), who touches on many writers of antiquity. He reports that one hundred and eight years after the Flood, *while navigating at the mouth of the Tiber River, Noah crossed the river Paglia and entered into the Valdichiana. He liked this place more than any other in Italy as it was a very fertile land, so he stopped and lived there for thirty years. One of his offspring named Crano arrived at one of the hills and was very pleased with the altitude, the amenities and tranquility of the air. He built the city of Cortona on this spot two hundred and seventy three years after the Flood. As it is affirmed by Stefano, a great Greek historian, **Cortona was the third city in Italy to be built after the Flood**, being also the metropolis of the ancient Turreni people. Crano, after taking the title of King, constructed a kingdom of towers on the top of the hill of which there are still remains in an area called **Torremozza**. The kingdom of Crano was called Turrenia because the city built by the descendant of Noah had high towers. This was the first name of Tuscany and the inhabitants were called Turreni. However, since they were descendants of Noah who had been spared from the waters "ab imbribus", some were called Imbri or Umbri in vernacular. **Dardanus** was born from the descendants of Cran. Following internal turmoil he fled to Samotracia then to Frigia and finally to Lydia, where he founded the city of Troy. **From Troy descendants of Dardanus, now Greeks, returned to live in Turrenia, that is Tuscany, and they became the Etruscans. We find Ulysses and Pythagoras among the Greeks who came to Turrenia and***

*Cortona. As it is told in ancient legends reported by the Greek writers Aristotle and Teopompo, after his return to Itaca and the massacre of the Price, Ulysses emigrated to Italy and more precisely to Etruria, the city which Teopompo called in Greek Courtenay. He located his burial place in Cortona or in its suburbs. In Etruria Ulysses was very respected and referred to as Nanas, which meant the Wanderer and his burial site was identified in "Monte Prego" near the current location of Prego. After his stay in Cortona, Pythagoras died there and was buried in a tomb which is called today "Grotto did Pit agora". According to Virgil (Enviad III and IV), Enema, a descendant of Darden, fled the destroyed city of Troy to Labium, where his descendants then founded Rome. **Therefore Cortona gave first origin to Troy and then to Rome.***

A part from the legends, the historical notes to be found concerning the city are numerous, but imprecise and sometimes contradictory. These references are reported by Greeks historians who wrote before Christ and by those who wrote after Christ who at times called the city Croton, Creston or Curton and by the Latin writers of the 1st century before Christ, that are Virgil and Titus Livy who respectively called the city Corito and Cortona. Modern historiography seems to admit today that Cortona was in origin an Umbrian city, then conquered and enlarged by the Etruscans, becoming one of the most powerful lucomonie in the Etruscan confederacy, together with Perugia and Arezzo. Evidences of its strategic position would be the extensive perimeter of its walls, the tombs of its princes, all the archaeological finds of this period which symbolize a rich city flourishing in artistic and industrial activity, minting a coin which, compared to what has remained, must be considered among the most perfect of the Etruscan time. Around the year 310 B.C., the greater part of Etruscan lucomonie (or city-states) were conquered by Rome. Cortona made an agreement with the powerful city and entered into its realm and witnessed what Polybius and Livy described as one of the most disastrous ambushes endured by the Roman army. This ambush took place in the territory of Cortona and was concluded along the banks of Lake Trasimene.

In the era of the social war it was probably submitted (like Arezzo) to the repression of Silla which was yet another blow leading to the loss of its strategic importance and economy. Written accounts of the times tell us, however, that in the first and in the 2nd century A.C., Cortona, one of the thirty-eight Municipalities of the VII Region of Italy, the Roman Etruria, the administrative reform of the Empire of Augustus, had a flourishing political and administrative life. For this reason, when during the second half of the 3rd century of the Christian era the Roman Municipalities of Tuscany started to install dioceses for Christian bishops, Cortona probably became a bishopric. Due to the almost absolute lack of documentation, one should be cautious in making this assertion. However, a document from the first half of the 5th century informs us of a martyrical memorial celebration, which took place in May in the mortuary chapel for the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Vincenzo. If Vincenzo was a bishop and he was buried in Cortona, one could believe that he was the bishop of Cortona and therefore that Cortona was a bishopric.

From a free city to the dynasty of the Casali family

The Podestà and the Captain of the People owned some palaces that still remain standing today despite the transformations. The religious community, channeled into wealthy and powerful lay organizations which were based in the churches of San Vincenzo, constructed over the tomb of the bishop martyr, now demolished (Via Duomo Vecchio n°3), in the parish church of Santa Maria, the ruins of which are covered by the church of Santa Maria Assunta, and in the old church of San Marco, which has also been demolished (Via San Marco n°39). The three churches divided the city into three neighborhoods: that of San Vincenzo, that of Santa Maria and that of San Marco. These divisions can be traced until the modern times. With the first competition of the "Archidado" two new neighborhoods were added to the three historical ones: Sant'Andrea and Porta Peccioverardi.

At the beginning of the century, with the arrival of Saint Francis in 1211, the city was taken over by the Franciscan charisma. Some of the noble

citizens wore the habits of the Franciscans and followed the saint to the hermitage called "le Celle". The names of some of these followers are Guido Vagnottelli, Vito dei Viti and according to Luca Wadding (1588-1657) a French researcher of the Franciscan movement, Brother Elias. Brother Elias would then become the successor of Saint Francis as the General Administrator of the Order. At the end of his term in 1239, due to his friendship with Frederick II, he personally took it upon himself to try and resolve the differences between the Pope and the Emperor. He tried to settle the disputes between Popes Gregory IX and Innocent IV. Feeling deceived he retired in Cortona, where upon a land donated to him by the Comune he built a church and a monastery dedicated to Saint Francis, as he had previously done in Assisi. In 1240 even Frederick II stopped in Cortona to nominate the Podestà. On April 22, 1253, Brother Elias died in Cortona with the holy reconciliation with the Pope. His Franciscan brothers buried him under the main altar of the church which he built and where he is still today, in a position similar to the one he chose for the remains of Saint Francis in Assisi.

In contrast to the message for peace of the Franciscan charisma, the century was deeply troubled by internal fights among parties of various social classes and wars with neighbors. It is reported that battles with Perugia endured until the year 1198. Then an alliance with Perugia led confrontations with Arezzo, which in 1232 was pillaged with the help of the Florentines. However, during the night between February 1 and February 2, 1258, the Aretines with the help of the Cortonese Guelphs (faction that supported the Pope) occupied and destroyed Cortona. People in exile requested asylum from Perugia and settled in Castiglione del Lago. They were reorganized by Uguccio Casali, and went to help the Sienese for the Battle of Monteperti (September 4, 1260), where the Florentine Guelphs were defeated. In exchange for that they were helped to return to their destructed city on April 25, 1262, the feast day of Saint Mark, who was taken as their patron saint. The coat of arms of the newly liberated Comune portrayed the lion of St. Mark in the place of the previous image of the ancient protector Saint Michael.

After the exiled people, a very beautiful, twenty-five year old woman came to Cortona. She was called **Margherita** and was born in Laviano (Umbria) near the lake of Montepulciano. She was back from the adventure ended with the killing of a wealthy nobleman with whom she'd been involved. Margherita, who was taken by the Franciscan charisma, worked together with the Casali to restore the destroyed city by assisting the neediest, working for the confraternity she founded, that is the Confraternity of Saint Mary of Mercy. More than a material restoration, Margherita carried out a moral, religious and social change, in the aftermath of fratricidal battles, inspired by brotherly love and peace spread by the charisma of Francis. It is not a light matter that when she died (February 22, 1297) the people immediately considered her as a saint. In the meantime, with the help of the Sienese, the city was reconstructed richer and more beautiful than before, and as they did in the previous century, they left their artistic imprint.

On November 11, 1289, Bishop Guglielmino degli Ubertini died in a ferocious battle at Campaldino. Together with others he had commanded the Ghibelline army (factions supporting the Holy Roman Emperor), which opposed the expansion of the Florentine territory. Guglielmino had been reprimanded by Margherita for his excessive attentions to worldly matters, instead of the spiritual care of the souls which he had been entrusted with. If not the master mind he had been one of the instigators of the sack of Cortona in 1228. The defeat at Campaldino brought less political autonomy for the free Comune of Arezzo which was gone under the realm of the Republic of Florence, whose goals were to turn to the conqueror of the southern part of Etruria where Cortona and Siena were located. Cortona would hold out for more than 100 years after the defeat of Campaldino, and Siena even longer. It was conquered in 1559 under Cosimo I who became the master of Tuscany and then the Grand Duke. To the three mother churches of the Terzieri, two memorial churches to Saint Francis were added in the 13th century. The first was the opera of Brother Elias built in the first half of the century on the site of a former Roman manufacturing complex, which had been donated to Elias by the Comune. The second was the new church of San Basilio built by Giovanni Pisano

on the top of the hill at the end of the century, right after Margherita's death, where later in 1330, the body of Santa Margherita was deposited. The latter was constructed next to the little church of the Camaldolesi monks which had been restored by Margherita.

The reconstruction of the city also gave stability to the free institutions which became increasingly supportive to the idea of an empire sustained by the **Ghibelline** faction. In 1240 Cortona had in fact received Frederick II before they were sacked by Arezzo. Frederick instituted a judiciary order in the person of Filippo Iacobi from Spoleto, of whom we have notice in the documentation of the donation made to Brother Elias. Iacobi received Henry VII of Luxembourg in 1312, pledging allegiance to him, acknowledging him as the direct Signore of the city and the territory and presented him with a tribute of one thousand florins. The 14th century was characterized by two very important events in the life of the city. On June 19, 1325, a bull from Avignon written by Pope Giovanni XXII restored or installed the diocese of Cortona within the borders of its communal territory. This same bull named Bishop Ranieri Ubertini, Buoso's brother, the bishop of Arezzo and uplifted the momentarily interrupted institutions of the dioceses, bringing the church built on the tomb of San Vincenzo to the level of cathedral. This is further evidence of how deeply rooted in the Cortonese people of that time was the devotion to that saint. In the same year Ranieri Casali became the Signore of Cortona. His descendants, Bartolomeo, Francesco Nicolò, Giovanni, Uguccio, Francesco Senese and Aloigi had in turn the post of Signore until the year 1409. The Casali dynasty was marked by these Signori's political skills, especially those of Ranieri (1325-1351) and Francesco Nicolò (1363-1375). A skill which enabled them to maintain for more than a century after the defeat of the Ghibellines at Campaldino the independence of Cortona, by using sharp political skills to keep a balance in the relationship with Florence and Siena. The Casali constructed their palace in the city center where the forum of the Roman city had stood at the crossroads of the Cardo (the north-south axis road of Roman times) and the Decumano (the main east-west Roman road) on the ruins of old Roman buildings. Today only the supporting walls of the building remain after the restorations of Filippo

Berrettini in the 1600's. In the countryside along the road which leads to Perugia the imposing Rocca di Pierle was constructed. The policy of friendship with the Sienese brought many Sienese artists to Cortona. They made contributions to the enrichment of the Cortonese artistic endowment and inspired the local artists. The atrocious family battles, in particular the ferocity of the last Casali Aloigi (1384-1409), who killed his uncle Francesco, wise and well-loved by the people, to take over the Signoria, brought about a spirit of rebellion in the Cortonese population. The occasion to oust the Casali family came in 1409. In order to assist the legitimate Pope Gregory XII during the Western split, Ladislao, the King of Naples of the Angioini-Durazzo dynasty moved against the anti-pope Giovanni XXIII, who was living under the protection of the Florentine Republic. Ladislao conquered a part of Tuscany and, with the consent of the Cortonese people, he conquered Cortona, placing an end to the Casali dynasty.

From Florentine domination to the kingdom of Italy

Later in 1411, Ladislao di Durazzo put his war-prize city up for sale. It was bought on January 14 by the Florentines for 60,000 gold florins and became a territory of the Florentine Republic. In the meantime the Republic with Cosimo the Elder passed under the control of the Medici family (1430).

Cosimo the Elder was succeeded by his sons Lorenzo and Giuliano, the latter was killed during the Pazzi Conspiracy. Lorenzo remained as the only Signore of Florence and his reign (1469-1492) was magnificent.



The Florentine happenings didn't shake the Cortonese, oppressed by the heavy taxes of their new masters, who wanted to recover the 60,000 florins paid to Ladislao. There weren't any attempts of revolt but the examination of the events brings to light a hostility felt by a large part of the population towards the Florentine government. It is known that the Signori of Florence, Cosimo the Elder and Lorenzo the Magnificent made

appearances in Cortona, but it is not known how they were received. The expression "The Signori of Florence" was used with a scornful tone. In Florence, after Lorenzo's death, the Republic was reinstated (1494). Pier Soderini, the brother of the bishop of Cortona, Cardinal Francesco, was named gonfalonier. However, the Medici returned to power (1512) with Giovanni, Lorenzo the Magnificent's son, cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, and subsequently with Lorenzo II, the Thoughtful, and a turn of luck brought Cortona to the good side of the Medici. Cardinal Giovanni became, for unknown reasons, a close friend of Silvio Passerini, who came from a noble but not wealthy Cortonese family, which had an oxen standing on three hills as coat of arms. According to Annibale Laparelli ("Memorie Cortonesi") the Passerini family died out around 1650 with Luisia di Antonio's death.

When Giovanni was appointed Pope (1513) taking the name of Leo X, Silvio Passerini was nominated his datary. Subsequently on July 1, 1517, he was made cardinal and assumed as his cardinal crest an oxen reclining below the Medici crest. When Leo X declared Passerini and his brothers the counts of Petignano in a papal bull dated March 26, 1519, even his brothers adopted the cardinal crest. In 1521, among other responsibilities, Passerini was conferred the title of bishop of Cortona. Silvio's good fortune at the service of the Medici came back to the city of Cortona: first Leo X named him governor of Tuscia and Umbria and then Clement VII made him governor of Florence. Leo X visited Cortona as a guest of the Passerini, on November 15, 16 and 17, 1515: these were glorious days for the city. Two papal bulls, one beatifying Margherita and the other relative to indulgences, tied to the Cult of the Holy Cross of Brother Elias were released for the occasion and were a display of papal favors to the city. A manuscript of that time, discovered in the historical archives, contains valuable material about the visit of Leo X to Cortona. It has been recently released for publishing by the Etruscan Academy under the title "Leone X a Cortona". The abundance of Cardinal Passerini's wealth and power was further manifested by the artistic restructuring of the Palazzo del Popolo (which had become his property after the donation by the Captain of the people on behalf of city), by the construction of the impressive residence

called **Palazzone**, which was rich in artwork, and by the donation to the head of the Cathedral of a precious and artistically crafted set of ceremonial vestments, which are now displayed at the Diocesan Museum.

Cortona preserves important works of art of the Renaissance atmosphere inaugurated by Lorenzo the Magnificent and ended with Leo X. The most splendid of them are the paintings by Luca Signorelli (1445/50-1523), a well-known artist in the later years of the 1400's, who worked in his workshop in Cortona in the early years of the 1500's. Between Perugino and Raffaello he added a personality to their art with paintings in Loreto, Rome, Monteoliveto Maggiore and most of all in Orvieto, where the composition of his Final Judgment pre-dated and inspired Michelangelo.

At the beginning of the century, in 1509, a bull from Giulio II transferred the site of the cathedral from the mother church of the medieval quarter of San Vincenzo to the mother church of the medieval quarter of Santa Maria. Thus the decay of the ancient church of San Vincenzo begun and caused the demise of the cult and devotion to the martyr Vincenzo. The ancient parish church of Santa Maria was completely renewed and given a renaissance facade. In the year of the invasion of the troops of the Emperor Charles V (1529) and the successive Pillage of Rome, in order to avoid being pillaged and to save the city, Cortona paid to the imperial commander of Prince Philibert of Orange an enormous sum of money which mortgaged all of the city's resources, the civic as well as the religious holdings.

In the following centuries, during the "War for the Duke of Castro" (1641-1649), the defense walls of the city were reinforced as it is attested by an epigraph found between the archways of the "Porta Bifora". In the same century many Cortonese artists from the Berrettini family were popular, mostly Piero (1597-1669) also called Pietro da Cortona. In the 1700's, the three Venuti brothers, Marcello (1701-1755), Ridolfino (1703-1763) and Filippo (1706-1768), became famous in the areas of literature and archaeology. They were involved in the foundation of the Etruscan Academy in 1727. In this same century after the enlightened reforms of

Grand Duke Leopoldo, in 1799, Cortona resisted the attacks of Napoleon's troops (who were mainly Polish) and took back by force its independence in the form of an uprising in the Valdichiana known as "Viva Maria". In September 1803 Maria Luisa Infant of Spain, the widow of Ludovic of Borbone and queen of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Etruria, visited Cortona. She was the guest of the bishop, Florentine Filippo Ganucci (1802-1806) and stayed at Palace Mancini on Via Nazionale. The event is commemorated by two plaques placed at the side of the entry door of the bishops' house and a stone plaque in the courtyard of Palace Mancini, now known as Ferretti. Elisa Bonaparte, Napoleon's sister and Grand Duchess of Tuscany from 1808 to 1814, visited Cortona in September 1809. During her visit she spent a long time in the Etruscan Academy passing a great amount of time in the museum and in the library. After the fall of the last Grand Duke Leopoldo II (1826-1859), following a referendum of the citizens that is memorialized by a marble tablet placed on the external part of the Town Hall, the city was annexed to the "Kingdom of Italy" on March 12, 1860.

From the kingdom of Italy to today

In the second half of the century, in the aim of honoring the results of a public vote which had been posed to Santa Margherita by the population, the old church designed by Pisano was expanded. In the first half of the 18th century it had undergone notable transformations. This last expansion erased the remaining architectural traces of the old Romanic Church and demolished the tiny church of San Basilio, next to the place where Santa Margherita died and was first buried. The new church rose from a plan that was worked and reworked by architects Presenti, Falcini and Castellucci. Thus it presents a style which is not very unified on the whole. The works were supervised by architects Paolo Mirri and Domenico Mirri, who wrote an interesting work journal that has recently been reprinted. During the first world war 600 Cortonese people died in the battle fields. In 1924 a memorial was erected in the church of Santa Margherita in the form of a votive chapel with a large wall mural by Osvaldo Bignami.

In the public gardens the fallen soldiers are remembered with a bronze monument, work of the Cortonese sculptor Delfo Paoletti (1895-1975). After the second world war, in August 1944, on Bishop Giuseppe



Franciolini's initiative (1932-1989), the city decided to give thanks for being spared from the destruction of the war. After taking a quick vote they commissioned the Cortonese artist Gino Severini (who was in Cortona at that time) to paint 14 stations of the cross, which were later realized in mosaic by the mosaic artist Romualdo Mattia and placed in the niches along the road which ascends from Porta Berarda to the Church of Santa Margherita. Gino Severini re-embraced his cubo-

futuristic style for this project and expressed decades of experience in decorative murals in this works, which are the expression of the artistic continuity of the city in this century.

Another important event in the history of the city took place on September 30, 1986 when the "Congregation of Bishops" decreed that the dioceses of Cortona, San Sepolcro and Arezzo would be unified. Thus the diocese which was reinstated or instituted on June 19, 1325, disappears again. Among the causes one might site the same "sign of the times" which caused its abolishment in Paleochristian times: the decrease in the population growth and the shortage of priests. Since the tomb and the church have been destroyed, there is no trace of what existed (if it did exist) of the first diocese of the fourth and sixth centuries. And what is even more disturbing is that the historical memory, the personal identity and the devotion to the first bishop-martyr Vincenzo has disappeared. This character means identity, historic memory and devotion that the Cortonese have a duty to reconstruct.

As for the history of the diocese from 1325 to the present day, it has been amply covered by Rector Giuseppe Mirri (1854-1911) in "I Vescovi di Cortona" printed by Calosci in 1972, which remains a fundamental resource for people who want to have a deeper knowledge of the events which took place in the Diocesan community of Cortona. Since 1986 the

signs of the time have gathered together Arezzo, Cortona and Sansepolcro under one bishop's throne and it is their duty to insure that the historical memories of the ex dioceses do not vanish, watching over all the remains of them in the churches, in the monasteries and convents, but most of all in the archives. Great evidence of what has been displayed until now is given by the local sandstone buildings left to us by the men who have succeeded in the various centuries: the walls and the doors, the houses, the palaces, the churches and the numerous works of art that they contained and still contain. Many of these works of art are now housed in the two prestigious museums: the Etruscan Academy Museum and the Diocesan Museum. In the end even the tombs are historical traces of those men, the memory of whom remains alive in every corner of this city through the indelible testimony of their prestigious works.

The walls

Etruscan walls of Cortona



The ring of walls, today a bit less than 3 kilometers, was constructed by the Etruscans around the end of the 5th century B.C. and can be seen at the base of the current day walls. It has a rectangular form with the two longer sides facing North and South and the shorter sides facing East and West. The short west side is very well preserved and the site of a recent reopening and restoration of the Etruscan gateway with unique double barrel-vaulted portals, which belongs to the Etruscan perimeter. The first part of the larger north side from

Porta Santa Maria follows the course of the Etruscan perimeter until the area above Porta Colonia where it reveals a sewer spout which dates back to the time of construction of the original wall.

Porta Bifora, Cortona

The remainders of the Northern length of the wall, as well as the shorter East side, were moved slightly toward the direction of a place called Torre Mozza. There are consistent traces and evidence of this old perimeter wall

and more about this place still remains to be discovered. Probably there was a temple or a fortification and an entry gate to the city (Porta di Montagna or Augurata?) at this point. The number and the positions of the Etruscan gateways are still to be determined.

The gateways

Porta Sant'AgostinoPorta Berarda

In the 3rd century after the Roman conquest, the damaged parts of the walls were reconstructed and raised in height. Four gateways were placed at the exits of the Roman city: from the decumano (the principal East-West Roman road), Porta Santa Maria and Porta San Domenico (also called Peccioverardi) and from the cardo (principal North-South Roman axis road), Porta Sant'Agostino and Porta Colonia. In the Middle Ages the walls were heavily damaged during the attack of 1258, they were



subsequently reconstructed and restored with the help of the people from Perugia and most of all of the Sienese. The two-opening Etruscan gateway was closed (Porta Bacarelli) and other gateways were opened: **Porta Montanina**

(originally called **San Cristoforo**), Porta Berarda and Porta San Giorgio. The last two were closed-up probably at the beginning of the 17th century. In 1642, the period of the war for the Dukedom of Castro, the walls on the West side were further reinforced under the grand ducal government, as we are informed by an inscription in marble placed above the archway of Porta Bifora. Towards the end of the 19th century the existing wall was opened to form Porta Santa Margherita to give access to the sanctuary nearby.



The fortress

In the second half of the 1500's, precisely in 1556, on the north east corner of the rectangular city walls, at its highest point, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo I had a fortress constructed. It rose from structures which had been fortifications during Etruscan, Roman and Medieval times. The last fortress



was destroyed in the sack of 1258.

The fortress was the work of Gabrio Serbelloni, nephew of Pope Pius IV, and of Francesco Laparelli of

Cortona. The structure is trapezoidal in shape with four large bastions. It continues to be a beautiful example of military architecture of the 1500's. After its reconstruction in modern times there is no news of battles which took place in it. Recently restored, it is now the site of art exhibitions and the "Centro Studi e

Documentazioni sulla Civiltà Contadina della Valdichiana e Trasimeno", a research center dedicated to the study of the peasant and folk history of the Valdichiana and Lake Trasimene areas.

Palaces and Villas

Baldelli Palace In the 11th century the "palace" was the symbol of the rural aristocracy of the high Middle Ages, moving from their castles and establishing within the urban walls of the free Comune. They were the exclusive homes of wealthy families in contrast to the "house", the house of the common people and the "church" which was the house of God and everybody. The aristocratic families then became solidly planted in public offices as well. From the 1500's to the 1700's they demonstrate their wealth and power by building palaces, from the restoration of old houses or by creating new ones. These palaces of Renaissance or Baroque architecture were adorned with family crests. At one time the interiors were rich in precious works of art, paintings, sculpture, furniture, libraries and archives. Today they are stripped for the most part and their treasures are dispersed, as opposed to what happened to the churches that still



contain a good part of their prestigious antique works. The major part of the palaces, if they have not been turned into public offices, is today cold condominiums. We have noted below few of the palaces which are interesting from a historic and an architectural point of view:

PALAZZO QUINTANI (13th century) On the corner of 26, Via Roma, this is a typical example of a house of the end of the 1200's. It has remained well preserved in its structure with large smooth walls in stone and arched windows of extreme simplicity.

PALAZZO ALFIERI-ALTICOZZI (13th century) In the 13th century the Alfieri family built its palace at 6, Via Nazionale on what were probably pre-existing Roman buildings. In the 1400's the ownership passed to the Alticozzi family and it was restructured and further expanded in the course of the 16th century, when it was decided to give it a new facade. It is a sober, tall and harmonious building. There are two noble floors above the ground floor with windows framed by stone and beams. The last floor, the one of the servants, has smaller square windows. In the friezes the family crest of the Alticozzi can be found.

PALAZZO PONTELLI-MANCINI (13th century) This palace is located on the corner of 15, Via Dardano. The lower portion of the building has a very evident so-called "door of the dead" of from the 1300's. The floor plan of the palace is medieval while its development in elevation has been done during the 1500's. The facade consists of a ground floor and two upper floors, divided by underlining cornices which mark off the levels. Each of the two upper floors has five windows and above the great door there is the crest of the Pontelli family.

PALAZZO TOMMASI-FIERLI (15th century) One of the largest and most majestic of Cortona, this palace can be found at 25, Via Benedetti. The lower floor is constructed with a long series of open ashlar archways, which are now closed. Two long rows of arched windows on the corners of the upper storeys are divided by the linear cornices. The facade is quite

impressive. In the lunette over the entry door there is a stupendous beat iron grate with the crest of the Tommasi family.

PALAZZO BALDELLI (16th century) This palace at 15, Via Guelfa is now the site of the Hotel San Michele. It is considered to be an "abridged history of Cortona" as it was the site of a fortification in the 11th century. In the 12th century it was the city residence of the Marquis of the Monte Santa Maria and in 1200 it was destined to be the public "Ragione" office, where the podestà would administer justice. It passed into the possession of the Baldelli family in the 15th century and was remodeled two times in the 16th century. There was other extensive work completed in the following century but the palace has essentially conserved its 1500's appearance.



Cristofanello-Laparelli Palace

PALAZZO CRISTOFANELLO-LAPARELLI (16th century) As it is indicated in the Latin inscription on the large frieze, Benedetto Laparelli, an apostolic protonotary at the time of Pope Paul III Farnese, had this building constructed in 1533 on the previous structures of his family's propriety at 4, Via Guelfa. The architect was Giovanbattista Infregliati of Cortona also known as Cristofanello (who died in Umbertide in 1554). The facade is of worked stone and is divided into three levels. The ground floor has wide ashlar arches, the middle has large arched windows divided by pilaster strips and the upper floor consists of a large loggia with ten columns and six pilasters. It is worth noticing the beat iron flag holders to the left of the entry door. Today it is the property of the Banca Popolare of Cortona (a bank) which has established its headquarters here and financed numerous restorations.

PALAZZO SERNINI-CUCCIATTI (16th century) The detail to admire on this palace located at 3, Piazzetta Alfieri is the elegant Renaissance entry door, the work of the Cortonese Cristofanello.

PALAZZO VENUTI (16th century) It is located at 70 and 72, Via Nazionale. The first Ridolfino Venuti, who died in 1602 and was buried like the second in the cathedral, left the palace in 1592 as final payment to the Cortonese architect Francesco Berrettini (who died in 1608), Pietro da Cortona's uncle, for the work he did on the new house on the main street (ruga piana). The palace rises above the ancestral home of the Venuti. The facade has figures of the Venuti crest and is developed horizontally along Via Nazionale. The name Ridolfino is carved on the door post of three of the doors on the first floor. The large fireplace and the entrance door are inscribed with Greek and Latin quotes. The doors are decorated with gouache paintings depicting popular allegories during the 17th century. On the ground floor we find two ashlar doors, while on the noble floor there are six large ashlar windows.

PALAZZO ZEFFERINI (16th century) This palace was built at the beginning of the 1600's in an area where the ancient residence of the Zefferini had stood between Via del Gesù and Via Zefferini, following a design by Filippo Berrettini (1585-1644), Pietro da Cortona's cousin. The compact structure was developed on three floors. Below the windows on the ground floor there are large stone faces and various friezes with the Florentine lily.

PALAZZO UCCELLI (17th century) The Uccelli family palace is found at 38, Via Roma and is derived, as is evident from the 1600's map of Berrettini, from the fusion (probably at the end of the 1600's) of two tower houses which existed at 34/36 and 42/44, Via Roma. They were centrally connected by a structure which had a vaulted stairwell with stairs in pietra serena (the local sandstone). The work was commissioned by two members of the Uccelli family called Domenico and Antonio and the date 1752 is inscribed on a marble plaque over the entrance door to a chapel at 1, Vicolo Uccelli which remains behind it.

PALAZZO TOMMASI (18th century) This palace can be found at 1, Via Dardano. The palace should be remembered because a good part of the artwork and furnishings, paintings, furniture, ceramics, etc, were the

property of Girolamo Tommasi, the last descendant of this prestigious family, and are now on display at the Etruscan Academy Museum, after they were donated by the widow Giulia Baldelli-Boni in the first years of the 20th century (1932). The palace is now property of the bishopric.

PALAZZO PETRELLA (18th century) This palace can be found at 15, Via Guelfa and in opposition to the others it is the only one which is still inhabited by the heirs of the family. It preserves in its interior notable objects of great value, like a library with various parchment and paper manuscripts from the 14th century. The library includes a three volume manuscript containing the constitution of Cortona.

PALAZZO MANCINI-FERRETTI (18th century) Projected in 1735 by architect Marco Tuscher on commission of the Mancini family, massive and imposing, it is an optimal expression of the Baroque style. In 1803 it received the Queen of Etruria, Maria Luisa Infant of Spain. It is a rectangular shaped building where the courthouse and some city offices can be found today at 45, Via Nazionale.

The areas outside the walls in the outskirts of the city are rich in places of historic and artistic revelations like the following:

THE FORTRESS OF PIERLE (13th century) The Fortress of Pierle is on the road that leads to Umbertide in Umbria, at about sixteen kilometers from Cortona. It was constructed by the Casali family around the end of the 13th century. Conquered by Ladislao, King of Naples, it was sold by him to the Florentine Republic along with the city of Cortona in 1411. It was built in a giant rectangular plan from which rose four towers, two of which are still visible.



THE PASSERINI PALACE AT FONTECUMOLA (16th century) called "**Il Palazzone**". It was constructed in 1521 by architect G. Battista Caporali on commission of Cardinal Silvio Passerini, whose crest is

enthroned in the keystone in the archway over the great entrance door. The paintings of Luca Signorelli can be admired in the nobleman's chapel as well as the frescoes in the hall of honor by F. Bernabei, known as Papacello, and considered as one of Signorelli's best students. The frescoes present scenes of the Roman history, among which we should note The Battle of Trasimene, The Death of Marco Curzio, the Head of Asdrubale Thrown into the Field of Hannibal and others. Today the palace is property of the Scuola Normale of Pisa, which organizes major research conferences directed by prestigious scholars.

VILLA VENUTI A CATROSSE (18th century) This villa was constructed between 1725 and 1730 by architect Alessandro Galilei on commission of Domenico Girolamo Venuti. In 1740 Marcello Venuti entrusted architect Marcus Tuscher with the task of designing an expansion to the complex. The expansion was never executed but the magnificent plan was conserved.

VILLA TOMMASI A METELLIANO (18th century) The villa of Tommasi family in Metelliano was built by canon Niccolò Tommasi and was expanded and enlarged between 1833 and 1870. Among its splendid structures from the 1700's we find a chapel dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist. The villa is surrounded by an admirable Italian style garden.

The Civic Palaces

City Hall The palaces were built on the initiative and at the expense of the civic or religious community, meant for the political, cultural and religious affairs of the community. The most famous and ancient of these palaces rise from the ruins of the old Etruscan and Roman cities and have undergone notable reconstruction through the centuries. Among these are to be noted:

City Hall Tower

PALAZZO DEL CONSIGLIO COMUNALE (12th century) The City Council Palace was built together with the autonomous Comune in the 12th century on the ruins of the Forum of the Roman city at the crossroad of the Decumano (the main Roman road) and the Cardo (the axis road). Originally a single large hall was placed on the top of the present staircase and was used for council meetings. Clear traces of the ancient construction can be noted on the right side of the building which faces Piazza Signorelli. In the 1500's it was extended to the left side beyond the present Via Roma and the bell tower was raised above the arch passing over this street connecting the two buildings. The large entrance stairway was also built at that time. In the following years, the building underwent numerous reworks and in 1896 it was restored following the whims of architect Castellucci, the same Cortonese architect who designed the present day facade of the church of Santa Margherita. On the side of the building that faces Piazza Signorelli there is a column which was raised in 1508 and supports Florentine sandstone. In the Council Hall, which can be reached by the staircase near the column, there is a fireplace found in the Sernini Palace in Piazza Alfieri, carved in stone by G.B. Infregliati, also known as Cristofanello (16th century).



PALAZZO DEL CAPITANO DEL POPOLO (13th century) The Palace of the Capitano del Popolo was constructed in front of the City Council in the 13th century, when the role of Captain of the People was established. The palace originally crenellated and crowned with a high tower, which there are remains of on the left side, where a bell was placed to call meetings. In 1411, after the Comune was purchased by the Florentine Republic, the position of Captain of the People was removed and the palace was turned over to the tax and duty offices. In 1512 it was donated by the Council of the Comune to Silvio Passerini, to win his favor, as he had



been named datary by Pope Leo X Medici. The Medici were the Signori of Florence, whom the Cortonese depended on. Passerini decided the bell should be moved and wanted the palace to be enriched with frescoes and stained glass windows by Guglielmo Marcillant, works of art that no longer exist today. He hosted in this palace Pope Leo X on November 15, 16 and 17, 1515, a stop that the Pope made during a trip to Bologna to meet the King of France François I. The palace became property of the heirs of Cardinal Passerini in the following centuries and underwent such a big number of transformations and expansions that it is difficult to read the primitive form of the building. The property has now been divided into many small condominiums, which seems to hold little respect for its glorious past.

PALAZZO VESCOVILE (16th century) The Episcopal Palace rose from the ruins of old buildings that had been used by the clergy who served the antique urban parish church of Santa Maria. Legend has it the Palace was also the home of Brother Elias during his first period of residence in Cortona. The remains that can still be seen on the facade show evidence of a medieval door that would have been part of the building. The expansion and the transformation of the Episcopal Palace are credited to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, who was nominated bishop of Cortona in 1521. Other expansions and embellishments were added by successive bishops. To the left of the 1500's entry door there are three crests. The first on the left is of the bishop Leonardo Bonafede (1529-1539), the centre one of Matteo Contini (1560-1562) and the last on the right of Costantino Veltroni (1577-1595). The palace is the headquarters of the offices of the Bishops Curate and its archives. On the side facade two marble plaques commemorate the visit to Cortona in 1803 of Queen of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Etruria, Maria Luisa Infant of Spain. She was the guest of the Florentine bishop Filippo Ganucci (1802-1806). The Queen was hosted by the Mancini family in their palace on Via Nazionale, where another commemorative marble tablet may be found.

PALAZZO CASALI (16th century) Legend has it the Casali Palace was built on the area of old Etruscan and Roman buildings, which there are visible remains of in the cellars of the nearby "Cassa di Risparmio" (a bank). In the Middle Ages after the inauguration of an autonomous Comune, the Abbot of Farneta constructed a few houses, which became the residence of the Consulate of the Terziere di Santa Maria (the headquarters of the council of the medieval neighborhood called Saint Mary). It was later bought by the Casali family, who became the Signori of Cortona (1325) and built their palace on the same spot. After the fall of the Casali family and of the free Comune, the Florentine administration established itself in the building. Between 1613 and 1621 they completely expanded and crests belonging to these administrators can be seen on the interior walls of the courtyard and on the external walls on the right of the building, which now houses the Accademia Etrusca (The Etruscan Academy), its museum and the libraries of the Comune and of the Academy, as well as the Civic Historical Archives. Because of its arrangement, this place of history is considered today as the Palace of Culture.



PALAZZO VAGNOTTI (18th century) The Vagnotti Palace was destined to become a theological study centre for the preparation of young priests. The first stone was placed by bishop Giovanni Ippoliti in 1760. The building rose from a plan by the grand-ducal architect Romualdo Cilli. The architecture is simple and austere inside as well as outside. The palace has two facades, the main one on Via Vagnotti and another on Piazza Giuseppe Franciolini where over the elegant doorway there is the stone tablet which commemorates Francesco Vagnotti, the man who had willed to his heirs the means for constructing this palace. The internal chapel, constructed in the 1600's by architect Francesco Jannelli was modified by Cilli at the end of the 1700's. The picture on the altar was painted by Giuseppe Valiani of Pistoia (1721-1810). Today the palace is property of the Bishops Curate and is no longer a centre for theological

studies in Cortona, but it is used for other needs. Between the end of August and the beginning of September it hosts the renowned National Antique Furniture Exhibit.

TEATRO SIGNORELLI (19th century) The Signorelli Theatre is owned by the Accademia degli Arditì. It is located on the corner of Piazza Signorelli, on the spot where there was the ancient Church of Sant'Andrea. It was designed by architect Carlo Gatteschi in 1854 following the Neoclassical style. The loggia has seven arcades and at the interior two rows of eight pilasters covered with lunette vaults. It has always hosted lots of activities and events and is also used as a cinema.

The quarters and the houses of Cortona

The Etruscan and Roman houses have disappeared. Some remains of these houses have come to light among the foundations of the modern and medieval constructions. The medieval house of ordinary people was usually a tower house with one room on each of the three floors. Even though many transformations have been made over the time, traces of this type of construction are legible in many of the houses to be found on Via San Marco, Via Benedetti, Via Ghibellina and others. They are small buildings, one-room wide and two-rooms long.

All the shorter sides face the street and for the most part run parallel to it. It is on this side that the windows are placed, usually two per floor. The entry door on the ground floor is usually centered on the facade and at times there are two doors. The longer sides adjoin the walls of the neighboring houses but they do not have common walls, since there was always a space at the base for the open sewer which carried away the waste. The stairway was usually in stone and occupied a small side strip of the front room. The first floor room had a large sometimes decorative fireplace with the mantel in stone. Beside the chimney, there was a space for the stone wash basin. The external facade



is always finely decorated in worked stone and cornices on which the window frames rested. In some cases they were arched, in others they were completely framed by elegant beams.

Cortonese houses of the 1300s

The houses that were built in the beginning of the 14th century in Cortona are distinctive: the facade at the level above the ground floor overhangs above the street. The facades of these houses are made of stone only on the ground floor, while the upper floors are made of brick. The support



beams, which are placed above the ground floor, jut out about a meter from the ground floor and become the support for the lighter construction in brick. Generally these houses have only one floor above the ground floor, however some of them have two floors. At the beginning of that century many examples of

these types of structures could be seen on the secondary streets of the city. However, there was a desire to modernize even the houses that did not need it, therefore many of these buildings were knocked down and today there are only a few on **Via Iannelli** and only two on Via San Benedetto.

The housing of the religious communities

In the past the religious communities, groups of men or women who freely decided to spend their existence in a religious community following written ordinations, were numerous in Cortona.. In the second millennium the Cistercian religious "Community" organized itself mainly according to the Benedictine rules, which were reformed by San Bernardo (St. Bernard 1090-1153). The Augustines followed the rules unified by Sant'Agostino (St. Augustine) in 1255. The Franciscans followed the rules of San Francesco (St. Francis 1180-1226), whereas the Dominicans followed San Domenico (St. Domenic 1170-1221). The nuns of the Franciscan community of Santa Chiara (St. Claire) called themselves the Clarisse (the Claires). In 1500 the Franciscans organized themselves into three orders:

the minors, the conventuals and the Capuchins. Today the "Communities" are modest in size and in number but their houses are still accessible: many of them are oversized in comparison to their needs and architecturally rich, while some of them are modest, but still interesting from the historical and artistic point of view. Here are some to be noted:

MONASTERY OF SAINT FRANCIS (13th century) It was built by Brother Elias, who died there on April 22, 1253. An oratory, a meeting room (capitular) and the sacristy of the adjacent church of San Francesco remain of the most ancient parts of the church. The remains of two biforate windows of the meeting room are still visible. The monastery was arranged around a 13th century or previously built courtyard, the traces of which can still be seen on the side of the church and the oldest part of the monastery. The porch of this courtyard was demolished in 1896 after the suppression of the monastery by order of the Italian government in 1866. It is managed by the Conventual Franciscans like the holy monastery of Assisi.

LE SANTUCCE (13th century) It was constructed like the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in about 1270 by the Benedictine nun Beata Santuccia of Gubbio, who died in 1305. The complex is made up of structures from the 1200's, the 1500's and the 1600's and is picturesquely placed along with the church. Now in a noticeable state of abandon, the refectory is covered by half moon vaulted ceilings. Today it is the home for the elderly in need of rest and care.

THE CONVENT OF THE POOR CLAIRS (13th century) Margherita the refugee from Laviano, after entering the city through Porta Berarda in 1272, took shelter in this house which was donated to her by the noblewomen Marinara and Raniera De Moscari. Today a private home, once housed the community of the Franciscan Terzieri, who were popularly known as "The Poor Claires". It is from here that she took part in the material and spiritual reconstruction of the city that had been destroyed during the sack of 1258. Among the ruins to which the

Cortonese had returned in 1263, Margherita took care of the poor and of the infirmed, giving life to the "**Confraternità di Santa Maria della Misericordia**" (The Sisters of Mercy). After the death of the saint the convent was restored and expanded. It continued to be a land holding of the Franciscan orders until 1808 when it was suppressed under Napoleon. Since 1917 it has been home of the "Sisters of the poor of Sister Savina Petrilli". On the inside the legendary room of Margherita can be seen along with two medieval wells excavated in the rock. There is an interesting church dedicated to St. Jerome, a Baroque work from the second half of the 17th century. On the main altar there is a painting from 1659 which portrays the Madonna and the Saints by Pietro Berrettini..

THE CONVENT OF SANTA MARGHERITA (14th century) The house was built contemporarily with the church immediately after Margherita's death. It housed the Franciscan Capuchins, who were charged with the care and the surveillance of the church and the religious rites taking place to venerate the body of the saint. Reminders of the ancient structure can be found on the lower part of the building. In 1385 the imperial vicar and the Signore of Cortona Uguccio-Urbano Casali entrusted the tasks performed by the Terzieri (which had become a heavy job due the great flow of people) to the Benedictine community from Monte Oliveto. Soon after in 1390 they renounced their duty of veneration and guardianship of the saint, which was then turned over to the Minor Brothers of the Franciscan order, who live in the monastery. The present day structure was completed around the end of the 15th century in accordance with the plans drawn up by the Franciscans.

THE MONASTERY OF SANT'AGOSTINO (14th century) Founded in the early years of the 1300's it was noticeably restructured in the 1600's. The building is rectangular in shape and elevated on the left side of the church with a central courtyard. One should visit the Capitular Hall, the solemn staircase and the internal courtyard. The lunettes at the interior were painted with scenes from the life of Saint Augustine in 1669 by G. Guasparini from Umbertide.

SANTA MARIA DELLA MISERICORDIA HOSPITAL (15th century) The construction of this hospital began in 1441 with the scope of unifying the many small medical assistance centers which existed within and on the outside of the walls of Cortona. Its care was then turned over to the Confraternita di Santa Maria founded by Santa Margherita. It presents an elegant Renaissance porch that runs along the facade on Via Maffei. Through various ages, especially ours, the complex has undergone heavy reconstruction to adapt it to changing needs.

CONVENT OF SANTA CHIARA (16th century) This convent was constructed for the community of the Clarisse Franciscan Sisters, which had been established in Cortona since 1225 when Saint Francis was still alive. They were originally housed at a hermitage in a place called Marignano, today called Contesse. In 1237 they moved from there to another hermitage in Targe, which is now the site of the cemetery. In 1581 the community moved from Targe to this convent which had been constructed for them by Bishop Ughi following designs by Vasari. Luca Berrettini, Piero's father, supervised the work. The area where the convent was built was the site of a cistern in Roman times of which many traces are visible. It is a cistern which probably supplied water to a series of hot baths, which were called in medieval times the Bath of the Queens, which occupied the zone where it was built the Church of Saint Francis. The Vasarian style is easily recognized in the grand entrance hall and in the church on the right of this hall. In 1650 the West end of the convent was extensively expanded. The church has a very evocative atmosphere. The main altar that divides it into two parts is a backdrop of carved and gold leafed wood by Stefano Fabbrucci. In the altar on the right is a portrayal of The Immaculate Conception by Comodi, while on the left is a painting representing the Deposition of the Body of Christ by Piero Berrettini.

The housing of the religious communities outside the city walls

The following are places which are rich in historical interest outside the walls and in the outskirts of the city:

“LE CELLE” FRANCISCAN HERMITAGE (13th century) During the course of his evangelical pilgrimages, Francis of Assisi came to Cortona in 1211. His charismatic preaching attracted a small community made up of Guido of Porta Colonia, Vito and, according to Wadding (an 18th century researcher of the Franciscans), Brother Elias and others. The community settled in this area and has been called ever since "le Celle". Along the inlets in the mountain there had been small homesteads and hermitages or peasants dwellings and a small church dating back to the Longobard invasions, dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel. The community of Le Celle was visited on numerous occasions by Saint Francis during the course of his life and his pilgrimages. His last stay at the monastery was in the summer of 1226, a few days before his death. At the time he was in company of Brother Elias, who had brought him for treatments in Siena and then to this place of peace and rest. After Francis' death in Assisi on October 4, 1226, Elias retired in Cortona in 1239 and finished the church of San Francesco which he had projected and built. He united the Franciscan community in the monastery constructed next to the church, but didn't forget Le Celle, where Francis gathered the first brothers, where Guido and Vito had lived and prayed. Legend has it that even Saint Anthony of Padua visited the place.



Elias brought about extensive restoration to this hermitage of peace and insured it as property of the Franciscan community. After Brother Elias' death, which took place in Cortona in 1253, and the complicated ups and downs of the Franciscan Order, a community of "Spirituals" also called "Little Brothers" took over the hermitage. They were expelled in 1363 after being excommunicated by Pope John XXII. Le Celle then fell into a period of abandon and ruin, which came to an end in 1537 when Bishop Bonafede turned the property over to the Capuchins, one of the three branches into which the Franciscans had been divided and approved in 1528. The Capuchins kept a constant respect for the original environment and widely enlarged the monastery. In 1634 they constructed a new church to replace the demolished church of Saint Michael the Archangel. The church was

dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua and shows the humble and simple style of Capuchin churches with wooden altars lacking in precious art objects. The "Fosso dei Cappuccini" in front of the monastery is crossed by three bridges, the oldest of which is the one in the middle. This bridge is called the Barberini bridge because it was built between 1594 and 1596 by the Capuchin novice Antonio Barberini. This Capuchin brother is an interesting figure, since he was a student at Le Celle and Pope Urban VIII's brother, who made him a cardinal in 1624. The profound love for power, wealth and prestige characterized nearly all the members of the Barberini family and in particular, a nephew called Antonino. He was also named cardinal and commissioned the paintings of the palace on Via Quattro Fontane in Rome by Pietro da Cortona. They had such an ascetic temperament that they wanted to be buried in Rome in the church of the Capuchins where they are remembered with a single anonymous



inscription "Hic iacet pulvis cinis et nihil" - There is nothing here but dust and ash. The down river bridge is called the Grand Duke's Bridge since it was constructed by the Grand Duke Giangastone Medici in 1728.

(18th century) On the mountain of Sant'Egidio in the area of Cortona there was a community of Benedictine Monks already established from the year 1000. The first abbey is documented to have been located in the area of a cross which can be found there today. After 1300 it was moved North-East to a place called Vallemagna towards the Nestore Valley, and afterwards in 1700 to its present location that is owned by the bishops' house. Only faint traces of the first two locations and a church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, a large guest room and six of the hermits' cells of the living quarters of the 18th century are still intact. The view through the woods is breathtaking and the area is surrounded by a mystical peace.

LE CONTESSE (19th century) The place where this wonderful complex has been built is enriched by a magnificent view and a marvelous park. It is indicated in ancient Roman documents under the name "Marignano".

The first community of Clarisse nuns moved there in 1225, then they transferred their residence in Targe, where the modern day cemetery is to be found today, and from which they definitively moved in 1581 to the present day convent of Santa Chiara. After the Clarisse left the place in 1237, a community of Benedictine nuns moved to Marignano and in 1290 they were united with another community of Benedictine nuns who abandoned their convent at Montemaggio. There were two noblewomen who were part of this community one was a countess from Cegliolo and the other a countess from Montemaggio, thus the name "Le Contesse" was substituted for "Marignano". Other people think the name comes from the fact that most of the women who joined the Benedictine convent belonged to noble families. In 1718 **Iannelli**, a Cortonese architect built the present day Baroque church on the 1237 site of the pre-existing church of the Clarisse nuns. It conserves a terracotta figure of the "Madonna of the Contesse", which was present in the old church, as well as the famous Assumption of the Madonna by Bartolomeo della Gatta, that can be seen in the Diocesan Museum. On the main altar there is a copy of a Byzantine-Crete "Madonna". The original can be found in the Church of Saint Alfonso on Via Merulana in Rome.

THE SANTA MARGHERITA INSTITUTE This residence of the Suore Serve di Maria Riparatrici is to be found at 15, Via Cesare Battisti. The building was constructed between 1930 and 1935 and was a gathering point for needy Cortonese children. The institute took afterwards the name of G.I.L.E.- Gioventù Italiana Littorio Estero (Hostel for Foreign-born Italian Youth). It would house the children of Italian people living abroad during the summer vacation. Until 1979 the institute functioned as a school for girls, but since 1980, after internal restoration, it became the headquarters of the bishop of the province. At present there is a community of seventeen sisters who reside in the institute. The part of the building which is not used by the nuns is let for accommodations: both private parties and groups can be accommodated and have use of the chapel, a conference room, a dining room for eighty and a room for preparing meals.

CASA BETANIA This is a house that is meant to receive guests for tourist or religious visits. It is located in 50, Via Gino Severini, at a short distance from the Santa Margherita Institute. It is run by the Sisters of the Stigmata (Poor Daughters of the Sacred Stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi) and is described by the sisters themselves as an "oasis of peace for the care of the soul". All year long bible study classes are held here with outstanding speakers. Betania also offers the possibility for organized groups, families and individual parties of all faiths and creeds to stay at the house for modest prices in a family atmosphere with respect and freedom.

The churches

In the 3rd century after the peace of Constantine there were notable changes to the religious pagan cults who held their rituals in the originally Etruscan temples. The early Christian religious cults probably used these same temples. It is nearly certain that afterwards the first buildings of the Christian cult within the city walls, the urban parish church of Santa Maria and the church of Sant'Andrea, which have now disappeared, have been built on the ruins of a pagan temple. The church of Sant'Andrea in particular occupied the area where there is the Signorelli Theatre.

After the turmoil of the high Middle Ages, the occupation of the Goths, of the Byzantines and of the Longobards, while the city tried to organize itself as a free Comune, Cortona was divided into neighborhoods called Terzieri (since there were three of them). Each of these neighborhoods had a mother church. Today only faint traces remain of these mother churches.



- **The Parish Church of Santa Maria**, is the mother church of the terziere of Santa Maria. It was almost completely demolished in the 15th century to build the present cathedral. A few traces of the old church can be found on the facade.
- **The Cathedral of San Vincenzo**, the mother church of the terziere of San Vincenzo. Located outside the gateway of Sant'Agostino at 3,

Via Duomo Vecchio, it was totally leveled in the 18th century. Private buildings now rise over the archaeological site, while sparse relics of the cathedral can be admired at the Etruscan Academy.

- **The Church of San Marco**, the mother church of the terziere of San Marco was also demolished in the 18th century and its title was transferred to the 1600's church located below it, which belonged to the Compagnia della Santissima Trinità and was called Church of San Marco starting from that moment. Although they are difficult to find, some of the remainders of the surrounding walls and facade can be seen at the end of Via San Marco, within the green archaeological zone, which is private property and is accessible at 39, Via San Marco.

In the 13th century, two other holy buildings were added to the three mother churches: the **Church of San Francesco** in 1240 which was meant to preserve the remains of its builder, Brother Elias, one of the pillars of the Franciscan history and, in 1297, the new **Church of San Basilio**. The Church of San Basilio was built in accordance with the projects by Pisano and was meant to protect Santa Margherita's body from 1330 until today. In the following centuries other important holy buildings, more beautiful and rich in art work, many of which still preserve these works internally, were added to the two above mentioned churches.

CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO (13th century) Like the basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, even this church was constructed by Brother Elias in 1247 on an area called Bagno della Regina, which had been donated to him by the Comune. Notable remains of some Roman constructions, probably hot springs, existed on that piece of land. The church is Gothic in style but has been heavily remodeled especially in the 17th century. The impact of its masses and the grace of its original lines, however, are still intact. The entry door and the large windows, which have recently been restored, are to be admired.



Some manipulations concerned the painting on the walls, once embellished with famous frescoes, where Baroque altars have been placed. The large Gothic windows have been closed and the stone high altar has been replaced with a marble Baroque one created by Bernardino Radi (17th century), which contains a relic of the Holy Cross. Besides the Holy Cross, which was brought by Brother Elias from Constantinople, the



church also preserves the tunic, an evangelistic manuscript, and a pillow. All these relics belonged to Saint Francis and have been preserved by Brother Elias, who called the saint "my mother", as we are told by Celano in the first biography of Saint Francis. On the wall on the right of the entrance there are the remains

of a fresco attributed to Buffalmacco (16th century).

Church of San Francesco, interior On the third altar there is the Immaculate Conception by Comodi (1609), while on the fourth the Miracle of the Mule by Cingoli (1597). In the chapel on the right of the apse there is a funerary monument dedicated to the first bishop of the diocese of Cortona, Ranieri Ubertini, who died in 1348. In the chorus we find the tomb of Brother Elias, the successor of Saint Francis as the leader of the order. In the third altar on the left wall there is a masterpiece by Pietro da Cortona (1597-1669): The Annunciation, one of the most

beautiful paintings of the 17th century. Luca Signorelli was buried after his death in 1523 in the crypt below, which is no longer accessible as it was closed in the 17th century. The church and the monastery are still undergoing an extensive restoration work. Brother Dominic Basili, who is presently in charge of the complex, has written several publications about the history of the church and the life of Saint Francis and of his companion Elias, which can be read in this church.

THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARGHERITA (13th century) The church is located in an enchanting position on the top of the hill. On the site of the present church existed a small church built by the Camaldolesi monks in the 11th century and dedicated to San Basilio. The small church was damaged during the sack of Cortona in 1258 and reconstructed in 1288 by Santa Margherita and along with San Basilio it was also dedicated to Sant'Egidio and Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Santa Margherita died in 1297 in a room at the back of the little church where she had lived the last years of her life. She was buried in the little church of San Basilio. Immediately after Margherita's death, the Cortonese constructed a larger church designed by Giovanni Pisano, where they transferred the body of the saint in 1330. From that moment this church was simply called the church of Santa Margherita.

Interior of the Church of Santa Margherita This church was then embellished with paintings and sculpture mainly from the Sienese workshops, of which remain a few paltry relics, such as the sarcophagus of the Saint and the Rose window installed in the present facade. Two marble Madonnas and a remainder of a fresco attributed to Lorenzetti are conserved at the Diocesan Museum. The church underwent considerable Baroque transformations in 1738 and in the second half of the 19th century, until the little church as well as the larger church by Pisano were completely demolished. They are unrecognizable today. Only the choir and two



vaults, the second and third of the central nave, of the early constructions are still visible today. The present church is the work of architect Falcini, who modified the project of Presenti as far as the interior is concerned. The facade is the work of Cortonese architect Domenico Mirri (1856-1939), who took over the supervision job from his father Paolo (1803-1878). He left behind a journal about the construction work on the new Church of Santa Margherita, which has recently been printed by the Etruscan Academy by Calosci Publishers in 1989. The rich marble mausoleum on the left of the transept by the Sienese workshops and the saint's urn have been created by Pietro Berrettini. In the altar at the back of the nave on the right there is a precious wooden crucifix, originally kept in the Church of Saint Francis and the work of an unknown artist from the early 1200's. Margherita prayed in front of this cross and received comfort and spiritual guidance. On the right side walls there are relics donated in devotion by the Cortonese Knights of Malta. On the left nave we see a large chapel in memory of the Cortonese who died during the war. Behind the church we find the bell-tower (1650) and the ancient Franciscan monastery surrounded by a large park.



CHURCH OF SAN CRISTOFORO (13th century) The church of San Cristoforo was consecrated in 1192 and underwent different transformations through the year 1760. On the left there is a large fresco which depicts the crucifixion, the annunciation and the assumption by the Umbrian school of the 13th century. **The external part of the church is positioned in an enchanting place and is characterized by its rustic construction and an open bell-tower in Romanic style.**

CHURCH OF SANT'AGOSTINO (13th century) The church of Sant'Agostino was constructed in Gothic style by the Augustine monks. Successively the beatified Cortonese Augustine monk Ugolino Zefferini (1320-1370) was buried and preserved in a baroque sarcophagus here. It

was redone and expanded in 1600 and there are parts of the original church and of subsequent expansions that can be detected on the facade. The parts of the old monastery that are still visible are the courtyard and the lunettes painted in 1669 by Giuseppe Guasparini from the brotherhood of Perugia, which depict scenes from the life of Saint Augustine. The third altar on the left held a painting portraying the Madonna and the Saints, a work by young Pietro da Cortona, which is now in the Academy Museum. On the left apse there is a remarkable, elegant Renaissance stone tabernacle attributed to the Cortonese craftsman Ciuccio di Nuccio (15th century). The church and the monastery are currently undergoing massive restorations.

CHURCH OF SANT'ANTONIO ABATE (14th century) The church of Sant'Antonio Abate (Saint Anthony the Abbot) rises in the area of Bagno di Bacco (Baccus' Bath), a reservoir from the Roman times, whose remains can still be seen on Via Sant'Antonio. Its shape is rectangular and its capacity is of 900 c.m. The facade is made up of irregular sandstone and corresponds to the present oratory and to the bell-tower. The present day open bell-tower was originally a tower, but it was substituted in the first half of the 1600's. The church has no longer been consecrated for worship.



CHURCH OF SAN DOMENICO (15th century) The Church of San Domenico was built in Gothic style at the beginning of the 15th century directly outside the city walls, in the area of the ancient gateway of Peccioverardi, which is now demolished. It was part of the monastery of the Dominicans that has been destroyed too. Sant'Antonio the Bishop of Florence and

Fra Angelico lived in this monastery. The facade is simple and harmonious. In the lunette over the doorway there is a fresco by Fra Angelico. The interior has a single nave. Despite the manipulations of the past and the baroque altars, the church has retained its primitive beauty, especially enhanced by the elegance of the archways of the apses and the

high raised presbytery. The prestigious work of art on the high altar is a triptych signed by Lorenzo di Niccolò, donated in 1440 by Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici. The reason for such a generosity was to have Fra Angelico in Florence to paint the Monastery of San Marco. The triptych depicts the Coronation of the Virgin with other scenes about the Annunciation and the Crucifixion. On the left apse of the church there is the Madonna with Angels and Saints by Luca Signorelli. The church also contained the Annunciation and the Triptych of Fra Angelico, a triptych by Sassetta and an Assumption by Bartolomeo della Gatta, works which can now be admired in the Diocesan Museum.

CHURCH OF SAN NICCOLO' (15th century) The church of San Niccolò was built at the beginning of the 15th century in Romanic style with an elegant porch adorning the facade and the left side. In 1440 San Bernardino of Siena founded there the "Compagnia di San Niccolò". The high altar preserves the standard of the compagnia, which was painted on both sides by Luca Signorelli. The front represents the Deposition of Christ surrounded by angels and saints. On the back there is the Madonna and Child enthroned between Saint Peter and Saint Paul. On the left wall we see a deteriorated fresco by Luca Signorelli portraying the Virgin with the child surrounded by various saints.

CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA (CATHEDRAL) (15th century) The church of Santa Maria Assunta known as the Cathedral or Duomo has been built on the ruins of the ancient parish church visible on the facade. **It is one of the oldest if not the oldest church of the city.** It was constructed at the dawn of the age of Christianity, perhaps in the 4th century, on the foundations of a pagan temple. Its actual form is due to constructions that took place in the second half of the 14th century according to some designs attributed to Giuliano da Sangallo. Immediately after the new construction, the church was declared the Diocesan Cathedral in place of the church of San Vincenzo, **located outside the walls.** The central



doorway and the side door are both works by Cristofanello (16th century). The main altar was created in 1664 by Francesco Mazzuoli of Cortona. The bell-tower of 1566 is the work of Cortonese architect Francesco Laparelli, who designed the city of La Valletta on the island of Malta and the fortification of the Mass of Sant'Angelo Castle in Rome. The interior of the church has undergone heavy remodeling in the 18th century. Over the altars in the chorus various paintings are preserved: The Nativity by Pietro da Cortona, The Death of Saint Joseph by Lorenzo Berrettini, a Crucifixion and the Doubting Saint Thomas from the Signorelli School, The Communion of the Madonna by Sante Castellucci and two Madonnas with saints, one by Cigoli and the other by Alessandro Allori. The marble ciborium on the left wall of the presbytery is attributed to Ciuccio di Nuccio. In the Venuti chapel on the right of the apse are the tombs of the three brothers Marcello, Ridolfino and Filippo who founded the Etruscan Academy. On the right rear wall there is a funerary monument to Cortonese citizen Giovan Battista Tommasi, Gran Maestro dell'Ordine di Malta. Through a door in the floor placed at the center of the presbytery we can access the crypt where the tombs of some of the bishops of the diocese were placed.



CHIESA DI SAN MARCO (16th century) The Church of San Marco is made up of two churches that are placed one over the other. They were built by the Compagnia della Santissima Trinità dei Laici in 1580 and were dedicated to the Holy Trinity. With the destruction of the old church of San Marco in the 18th century, the present church, which was not too far away, took the title and the name of San Marco. It is the church of the patron saint of the city. It has a single nave in Baroque style designed by Sellari. The canvas on the right side altar is attributed to Comodi and portrays Saint Carlo Borromeo. The Church contained the Lorenzetti crucifix that is now at the Diocesan Museum. The lower church is very beautiful with painted vault ceilings and canvases painted with scenes from the sacred history. On the facade that watches over the valley

there is a large mosaic portraying San Marco created by Gino Severini (1883-1966).

CHURCH OF THE SPIRITO SANTO (17th century) The Church of the Spirito Santo (the Holy Spirit), like the one of San Domenico, was constructed outside the city walls. This church at the gateway of Sant'Agostino is also dedicated to the Visitation of the Holy Mary. It was built between 1637 and 1669 according to the designs of Filippo **Berrettini**. The dome and the facade were finished in 1751. The floor is built on a slight Latin cross plan. The facade is harmonious and elegant. It is constructed of uneven blocks of pietra serena and divided into two by a horizontal strip of cornice. The upper half is topped by a belfry with on small opening and has one central square window. From the belfry there are two angular pilaster strips, which are finished at the bottom by a case. Two other pilaster strips depart from the cornice and run along the lower half. These details give a pleasant upward motion and neoclassic grace. The interior of the church is characterized by the contrast of the white stucco with the gray pietra serena, which gives the architectural lines a Renaissance look. The high altar is the work of Fabbrucci (1687-1767), who also created the statues of Faith and Charity. On this altar there is an image of the Virgin Mary, while on the left side altar there is a canvas with the Madonna, with images of Purgatory and Santa Margherita by an unknown artist, below the altar is a wooden statue by Fabbrucci. In the altar on the right side there is the Madonna with Baby Jesus, Santa Margherita and San Felice by Giuseppe Angeli, a student of the artist Piazzetta.

CHURCH OF SAN BENEDETTO (18th century) The church of San Benedetto was constructed in an oval Baroque shape by the Scolopi Fathers in 1722. The frescoed vaulted ceiling painted by Florentine artist, Taddeo Mazzi (17th century) has an image of Saint Joseph Casalanzio. The altar is dominated by a wooden statue of Christ tied to a column, an expressionist work of the 17th century.

CHURCH OF SANT'ANDREA IN SAN FILIPPO (18th century) The Church of Sant'Andrea in San Filippo is a Baroque construction from 1720. It was built by Cortonese architect **Iannelli**. By choice of the Philippian Fathers, to whom the church was entrusted, the building took the name of the old church of Sant'Andrea, which was located in Piazza Signorelli and was demolished in the same century with the addition of San Filippo. The Madonna is portrayed in a canvas by Piazzetta (1745) on the left side altar, while on the right side altar there is a canvas by Cortonese artist Domenico Venuti representing San Filippo Neri and the Madonna. The main altar is the work of Cortonese artist Francesco Fabbrucci.

Outside of the city walls, close to the city, there are sites to note for their historic and artistic value, such as:

CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE ARCANGELO IN METELLIANO (7th century) The church of San Michele Arcangelo (Saint Michael the Archangel) in Metelliano is located at the entrance to the valley of the river Esse about 5 kilometers from Cortona. Built around the 7th century by the Longobards, after they conquered the area, it was dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel. It is noted that the Longobards had a particular devotion to Michael the Archangel. Around the year 1000 the church was redone in pre-Romanic-Byzantine style by Maginardo, an architect from Arezzo who left intact the two beautiful side apses from the 7th century.

ABBEY OF FARNETA (7th century) The church of the Abbey of Farneta is located about 10 kilometers from Cortona. The Abbey of the Benedictine monks was built around the 8th and 9th centuries thanks to the great generosity of the Counts of Ronzano. It reached the height of its splendor between the 9th and the 14th centuries. The monks remained in possession of it until 1780 when it was suppressed by the Grand Duke Leopoldo. It was then passed to the secular clergy and their holdings were given to the Capitolo of the cathedral of Cortona. The structure of the apse and the crypt, which was recently rediscovered and restored, are very impressive.

CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE AL CALCINAIO

(15th century) The Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Calcinaio was constructed between the years of 1485 and 1513. It is the architectural work of Francesco di Giorgio Martini who designed it after having been contacted by his friend Luca Signorelli. The Renaissance style church built on a Latin cross plan with an elegant dome soars into the olive trees on the hillside above. It was the church of the guild of the shoe makers, who had their vats of lime to be used for tanning leather, protected by an image of the Madonna painted by Bernardo Ciovatti, which is now displayed on the main altar of the church.

CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NUOVA (16th century) The Church of Santa Maria Nuova was built towards the end of the 1500's, according with the designs modified by Cristofanello and originally done by Vasari, as some people affirm. This beautiful church with Greek cross plan has three identical facades. The dome, which was influenced by Baroque style, was completed in 1600. Inside the church there are four pilasters, which support the mass of the construction and give it a strong upward motion. The high altar is by Cortonese artist Radi. The altar on the right at the entrance holds a canvas painting by Alessandro Allori that depicts the birth of the Virgin Mary (16th century). The Rosette window on the facade is by Urbano Urbani (16th century) and represents The Adoration of the Magi. In the chorus there are elegant pews from the 1500's.

