LA VIA DEL BORGO
UNA STRADA DA PERCORRERE

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HISTORICAL FACT

When **Gorizia** Held **Markets** (and Fairs)

THE FIRST MAJOR FAIR OF THE YEAR BEGAN ON MARCH 16, THE FEAST DAY OF THE PATRON SAINTS ILARIO AND TAZIANO. IT IS SAID THAT THE CITY TOOK ON AN "UNUSUAL" APPEARANCE

Gorizia has always been a **town of thriving trade**. It is enough to think that, in the past, the city hosted **four annual fairs** and **several weekly markets**. The first major fair of the year began on March 16, the feast day of the Patron Saints Ilario and Taziano. R. M. Cossar recounts that, during the fair, the city took on an "unusual" appearance: the reliquaries of the Patriarchate of Aquileia were displayed in the Cathedral, and numerous masses were celebrated. The **fair of Saint Ilario and Taziano** lasted eight days, and one could find goods of all kinds! This was all regulated by a municipal ordinance from 1852, which designated specific areas for trade during the annual fairs.

The end of summer was dedicated to **the fair of Saint Bartholomew**, which began on August 24.
It once lasted fifteen days, and 18th-century sources testify to a highly attended event, an occasion for socializing and recreation.
It is said that the most characteristic market was the ***marciàt dai usei***, the bird market, which was traditionally held in the **Caraveggia Courtyard**, in Piazza Duomo, and by the end of the 19th century had moved under the porches of the former Convent of the Friars Minor in Piazza Sant'Antonio.
In addition to this market, during the Saint Bartholomew Fair, many other goods could be found, such as wheat and corn; by the late 19th century, the rag-and-bone men had become the main attraction of the fair in Piazza Sant'Antonio.

In autumn, starting from September 29, **the Saint Michael Fair** was held, which, like all the annual fairs in Gorizia, offered a wide variety of goods and entertainment: cherrywood barrels, woolen stockings and slippers, and the stalls of street performers.
The animal market was particularly important, where farmers bought piglets to raise.
But this fair also boasted a deep-rooted religious tradition: the procession that started from the Metropolitan Church and ended at the **Sanctuary of Monte Santo** concluded with a solemn mass.
R. M. Cossar also recounts that Sior Michel Zanuttig, a hatmaker from Gorizia, composed toasts for this fair, one of which went: "**All festivals are beautiful, long live Saint Michael!**"
The last **fair** of the year was that **of Saint Andrew**: you can read about this fair in the previous issue, dedicated to Gorizian Christmas traditions!

View of Piazza Grande (now Piazza Vittoria), 19th century. Photographic archive of the Palazzo Coronini Cronberg Foundation.

VISIT TIP

Speaking of reliquaries of the Patriarchate of Aquileia...

A permanent exhibition on **the Treasure of the Gorizia Cathedral** was recently inaugurated. The entrance is free, and it can be visited **inside the Cathedral**: it offers an extraordinary display of reliquaries, monstrances, chasubles, and **the wooden busts of Saints Ilario and Taziano**, dating back to the **16th century**!

The fruit and vegetable market in Gorizia, *Der Gemüsemarkt in Görz*, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv.

How the 1852 **regulation organised trade** in the city:

In **Piazza Sant'Antonio Nuovo**, firewood and building materials, as well as tools, were sold;

In **Piazza Grande** (now Piazza Vittoria), one could find fabrics, linens, haberdashery, hardware, trinkets, toys, books, prints, jewelry, and silverware, as well as vegetables, fruit, milk, poultry, and game;

In **Piazza Duomo** (now Piazza Cavour), bread and cereals were sold;

In **Piazza Corno** (now Piazza Edmondo de Amicis), coal, scrap objects, firewood, dead calves, salted meat, butter, and cheese were offered;

In the **square behind Fratta** (that is, the street behind the Castle, now Via Giustiniani), various animals could be found;

There was also the **Fish (and Herbs) Square**, located where the end of Corso Verdi is today, in the small square where the urban buses stop, which is still remembered as Piazza delle Erbe.

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Photographs by Isidoro Trovato and Lodovica Gaia Stasi

Our Borgo is full of **curious details** waiting to be discovered!

Here are a few we'd like to share with you! They are scattered throughout the historic center: find them with the help of the map on page 4.

1. ON THE COLUMNS OF CASA RASSAUER
In front of the Provincial Museums, three columns support the large arches of the loggia of Casa Rassauer.
Among leaves, tendrils, and other decorative motifs, there are two almost faded faces: there, someone has traced the shape of a small flower.
Find it!
It's located in area n. 1.

2. *LUDATIS PUERI*
In the lower town, the first streets were created right under the castle walls.
From Borgo Castello, descending towards Piazza Cavour (formerly Piazza Duomo), you will find one of these ancient streets: silent and narrow, it starts with the third letter of the alphabet. There, you can return to childhood because you can play hopscotch, *pea*, *porton*, *settimana*... Have you found it?
Area n. 3.

3. READING THE TIME THROUGH A CRACK
You need to search between 6 and 7 in an ancient square of the city. There, a clock on the sidewalk tells you where to look: through the gap created between the buildings of Via Rastello, you can see the first dome of Sant'Ignazio, and some even manage to read the time on the church's large clock.
Why? Because from that particular side of the square, it was impossible to read the time from the Duomo's bell tower, and once, when few people owned watches, one had to check the bell towers of the churches to know the time.
Area n. 2.

4. A STAR AS A SIGN
At the start of the new year, in one of our most picturesque squares, the city's hunters would gather. The meeting point was in front of an inn that was once very famous and is still recognizable by its sign: a golden star.
Look for it in area n. 2.

5. THE BIRD COURTYARD
In ancient times, during the Saint Bartholomew fair, the bird market (*marciàt dai usei*) was held in the Caraveggia Courtyard.
R.M. Cossar, in his *Gorizia d'altri tempi* tells us that in the mid-19th century, the merchant Francesco Genuizzi had, out of curiosity, counted the number of nails hammered into the buildings within the courtyard to support the birdcages: he counted over five hundred!
The courtyard still exists, **find it in area n. 2**!

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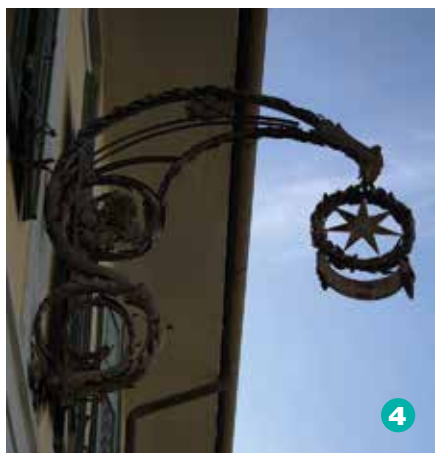
6. THEY WATCH YOU FROM ABOVE
In the city, it's quite common to see faces carved at the entrances of various homes, especially on the keystones of the arches marking the entrances.
These aren't just any faces: they are the *panduri*, mustached Hungarian warriors (once feared) tasked with protecting the building and its inhabitants.
Now that you know, you will start seeing *panduri* everywhere!
There are many, the one in the picture is **located in area n. 2**.



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7. THE BARZELLINI SUNDIAL
On the right side of the Duomo in Gorizia, looking up, you can admire a large sundial made in 1778 by Gian Giuseppe Barzellini. In a small niche, just above the sundial, stands a bust: according to some, it represents an angel, while others say it's Barzellini himself!
Look for it in area n. 2!

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On the keystone of the arches of the palace, a crescent moon is carved, the ancient coat of arms of the noble Ungrispach family, now the symbol of the municipality of Cormons.
It's located in Piazza Cavour, **area n. 2**.

9. THE COAT OF ARMS OF PALAZZO STRASSOLDO

Palazzo Strassoldo, now a large yellow building, overlooks Piazza Sant'Antonio, which once housed a convent.
How can you recognize it? You need to find the Strassoldo family coat of arms somewhere on the façade.

8. THE INSCRIPTION ON THE UNGRISPACH HOUSE

Looking up above the portico of one of the houses in Piazza Cavour, at the corner with Via Rastello, you will notice a plaque in Latin, in Gothic script: *"anno Domini 1441 incepit Simon Volker aedificare hanc domus,"* which means "In the year of the Lord 1441, Simon Volker began to build this house."

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11. THE MYSTERY OF THE PLAQUE IN PIAZZA SANT'ANTONIO

In Piazza Sant'Antonio there is a plaque with an inscription in Latin: *"AD 1612 ER DNLCVS · CARFANEVS · A · STAFFULO GVARDIANVS · F · E,"* which translates to: "In the year of the Lord 1612, the guardian friar Domenico Carfagni from Staffolo had it erected."
The plaque testifies to the existence of a Franciscan convent, founded in 1225 and demolished at the end of the 18th century. It remains uncertain whether the inscription was completed, as a large empty space is visible beneath it. An interesting mystery!
Area n. 4.

12. THE WROUGHT IRON OF CASA TOMINZ

Piazza Cavour, once known as Piazza Duomo, was home to Giovanni Tominz's hardware shop at number 29, the father of Giuseppe Tominz (1790-1866), a famous and exceptionally skilled portrait artist from Gorizia, born right next door.
Take a moment to admire the beautiful wrought iron that decorates the entrance gate: so many details and such skill were required to create them!
Area n. 2.

P.S. Do you know why it is now the "Entourage" Hotel? In 1836, King Charles X of France arrived in exile in Gorizia with his *entourage*, and they settled precisely in Palazzo Strassoldo, while the king, the council, and the servants stayed at Palazzo Coronini.
Go to area n. 4 to take a look!

10. DRAGON-SHAPED GUTTERS

Walking along the ancient Via Rastello, looking up, you can notice, in some spots, gutters in an interesting shape: dragons! How many are there? Try counting them!
Area n. 3.

A Thriving Market... of **Silkworms**

In Gorizia, weekly markets were held throughout the year, on Mondays and Thursdays.

One of these, among the most interesting testimonies of the economic and social vitality of old Gorizia, is certainly **the *Gaietta* market**: dating back at least to the 16th century, it was linked to **silk production**.

The *Gaietta* market was primarily **a market for silkworms**, which were sold **under the arcades of the former Convent of San Francesco in Piazza Sant'Antonio** by numerous merchants, many of whom were women!

It was **a true commercial event** that, starting in early June, involved Gorizia and its province.

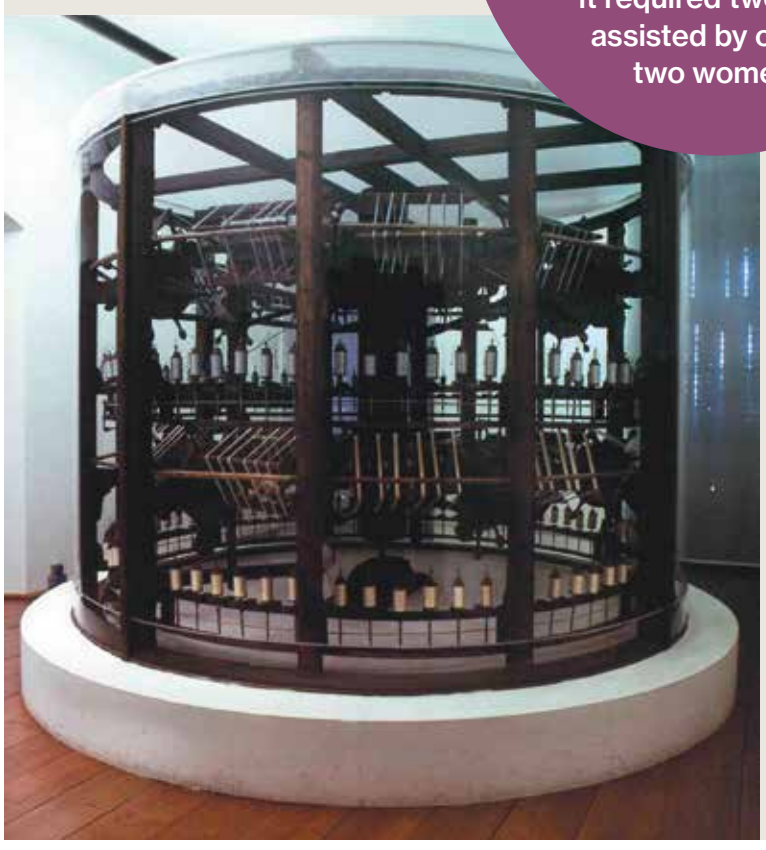
In the region, the cultivation of mulberry trees, whose leaves are the main food for silkworms, was widespread.

In short, silk production supported an entire supply chain that included: the cultivation of mulberries, the breeding of silkworms, the spinning and weaving of silk, representing an important source of income for the local population.

Circular silk reel, 18th century, property of the Provincial Museums of Gorizia. Photo taken from *Guida al Museo della Moda e delle Arti Applicate*, edited by Raffaella Sgubin, Editoriale Lloyd, Trieste, March 2005.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Provincial Museums of Gorizia house a beautiful example of an 18th-century circular silk reel: it appears enormous, and operating it required two men, assisted by one or two women!



Piazza Vittoria and Via Rastello: **Memories of Shops, Merchants,** and **City Life**

PIAZZA VITTORIA AND VIA RASTELLO HAVE BEEN AT THE HEART OF COMMERCE AND CRAFTSMANSHIP IN GORIZIA

Issue No. 11 of the ***Agenda storica di Gorizia*** features a fascinating article by **Andrej Kosič** entitled "***Traunik and Via Rastello: A Merchant's Memories***." This piece recounts the history of trade and the residents of Piazza Vittoria and Via Rastello, drawing on the author's personal memories as well as on written and oral testimonies. For centuries, **Piazza Vittoria and Via Rastello have been at the heart of commerce and craftsmanship in Gorizia**. Long ago, the square was just a simple meadow, known as "Travnik" (the Slovenian word for "meadow"), yet over time it evolved into a bustling marketplace for **goods of all kinds**, arriving **from the Isonzo Valleys, the Vipava area, the Karst, Friuli**, and even more distant regions. Kosič offers **a true chronicle**, retracing the history of artisan workshops and shops **dating back to the early 1900s**. Through his storytelling, we find ourselves virtually strolling along Piazza Vittoria and Via Rastello, embarking on **a fascinating journey through time**. Along the way, we learn about the shops' fortunes and remember the names and personalities of their merchants. For instance, **at No. 11 Piazza Vittoria**, there was once the Banca Cattolica del Veneto. Its manager was so accommodating that he would delay payment deadlines to help customers. Or consider **Via Rastello, at numbers 54, 58, and 61**, where the "Mervic" grocery stores once thrived. There worked a man with round glasses and a doctor-like demeanor, who specialized in selling an astonishing variety of goods. Among the author's most personal memories is the story of **Casa Bernt** (Nos. 51-53 in Piazza Vittoria), home to a well-known furniture shop. In the 1960s, Kosič's father purchased the merchandise and business license; together, father and son worked there for several years before relocating the shop elsewhere. The article continues, listing and describing the old shops and merchants of Via Rastello. As Kosič concludes, many of these shops no longer exist, or else they have changed purpose over the years. Nonetheless, this account, presented here only in part, provides an intriguing snapshot of local life and serves as **valuable evidence of the once-thriving commercial vitality that characterized *la Via del Borgo***.

LA VIA DEL BORGO

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- THERE AND BACK AGAIN. TO AND FROM THE BORDER BY FOOT
- CASA RASSAUER, A 15TH-CENTURY STORY
- AND MUCH MORE!

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#GORIZIA

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