



## THE «PLATEA MAGNA»

You can find this point of interest in Cantù - Path 2 - Stage 1  
Cantù – Path 1 – Stage 2 also passes by this point of interest

### INFORMATION

**Location:** the “*platea magna*” - Cantù’s public square in the Middle Ages - was probably located to the south-west of the present Piazza Garibaldi.

### DESCRIPTION

In the Middle Ages Cantù had a public square, referred to as «*platea magna*» by don Carlo Annoni in his work *Monumenti e fatti politici e religiosi del borgo di Canturio e sua pieve (Monuments and political and religious facts of the village of Canturio and its parish)* (1835). It is here, in fact, that a trial for witchcraft is believed to have taken place in 1453 against *Gualterium de Pellegrino* from Como, «*hereticum et strionissium*», in the presence of the podesta of Cantù, *Johannes Luchinus de Olzate*. The trial ended with the former being condemned to the stake.

Probably the square was not in the same location where we now find Piazza Garibaldi. A plan of the village of Cantù and Galliano dating back to the second half of the sixteenth century, preserved in the Diocesan Archive of Milan, shows a very visible rectangular «*piaca*» at the centre of the village, positioned slightly more to the south west of Piazza Garibaldi. This was the point of convergence of the three roads that connected Cantù with the outside world: that coming from the Fontana Gate, that from the Campo Rotondo Gate and that from the Coldonico Gate.

By looking at the map of the “Theresian” Cadastre of 1722 one can see, on the other hand, that at least part of the square’s area was occupied by buildings and included in the system of the “*Contrada delle Torri* (Towers’ Quarter)”. In particular, on the site where a cafe-newsagent currently stands, both maps highlight the presence of the church of S. Cristoforo (St. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers). Founded by *Alberto da Paratis* in 1348, the church was a very important building as, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the communal assemblies of all the people of Cantù entitled to participate were held in the pronaos in front of it, or even inside the church itself. As can be inferred from the drawing commissioned by Saint Charles Borromeo in the sixteenth century, it had a nave, two aisles, and three chapels; it was destroyed by fire, and in the first half of the nineteenth century it was razed to the ground.