



LE VILLE DI DELIZIA (THE PLEASURE VILLAS)

DESCRIPTION

«The whole of Upper Brianza is scattered with aristocratic homes, the so-called “ville di delizia (*pleasure villas*)”, surrounded by superb parks, more or less in view of the lakes, full of history, literary references, anecdotes and curiosities.

There are several reasons for the blossoming of architecture of this kind, the most important of which is, of course, the beauty of this area, which prompted nobles and wealthy bourgeois to build their country houses here; moreover, the area was close to Milan in times when even short journeys were real adventures. However, other reasons, connected to history and custom, offer an explanation in greater detail of why this particular area of Brianza experienced this boom in domestic architecture.

In the last decades of the 19th century, Palazzo Carpani started to be used a summer residence by the Viceroy: Archduke Ferdinand of Habsburg, while acting as governor of the Duchy of Milan, was the first to choose to stay in Pusiano. Apparently he, too, followed the fashion that brought Milanese noblemen here, attracted by snow grouse hunting, a practice which took place with meets and rituals similar to those of British fox hunting.

The Archduke was later imitated by Viceroy Eugene, Napoleon's stepson, whose presence at the villa of Pusiano was more frequent, and who bought the Alp above Erba that still bears his name (*Alpe del Viceré*), where he sent his beloved horses on holiday. At the return of the Austrians, the Pusiano villa continued to be one of the country residences of the Viceroy Ranieri of Habsburg, albeit more sporadically.

Over time, it was only natural that the area became particularly popular as a location for lavish summer homes, thanks to the three courts with all the social life that went with them.

Even after the formation of the kingdom of Italy, Upper Brianza continued to remain an exclusive resort for nobles and bourgeois. Erba had its own famous racecourse, which competed with the one in Milan. The Savoy royal family in full, who came from the Palace of Monza, attended summer and autumn horse racing: local villas, which in the meantime had become even more numerous due to the continued fashion, rivalled each other as hosts during the sojourns of King Umberto and Queen Margherita. All of that ended with the three shots fired by anarchist Bresci on 29th July 1900 which killed the sovereign: the court definitively abandoned Monza, the great social season of this area ended once and for all, and villas returned to be only country dwellings for affluent families, thus beginning their long, very slow decline».

(Freely drawn from S. Fasana, G. Mauri, A. Molteni, *Il Pian d'Erba e i laghi Briantei*, Bellavite Editore, Missaglia 1998)