



## THE MILANO - ERBA - ASSO LINE OF FERROVIE NORD MILANO

You can find this point of interest in Canzo - Path 1 - Stage 5

### DESCRIPTION

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Canzo and Asso are at the centre of the Ferrovie Nord Milano (*Northern Milan Railways*) network. Although geographically this statement may seem to be out of place, in actual fact it is not like that at all, at least from a historical point of view.

The decision to bring the train to upper Brianza is at the origins of the railway track system which over time would become one of most important local transport networks in Italy.

Before taking the famous name of "*Ferrovie Nord Milano*" (*Northern Milan Railways*) (1883), it was called "*Società Anonima delle Ferrovie Milano-Saronno e Milano-Erba*" and it was on these two sections that its founder - Belgian engineer Albert Vaucamp - started this railway service, which later proved so valuable to the economy, culture and development of large portions of the Lombard territory.

The specific project (with terminus at Erba-Incino) was drawn up by engineers Bianchi and Campiglio, and the first train arrived in this city of Brianza on December 31<sup>st</sup> 1879, at a station which is no longer in existence.

The current station of Erba is in fact different from the original, as the extension of the railway line to Canzo-Asso involved its complete reconstruction in a different location, although not very far away.

The idea to extend the line to the Valtassina was debated for a long time, and implemented only in the 20s of the last century (also due to the Great War) at the time of the greatest expansion of the Northern Milan Railways network.

The new section was inaugurated on June 15<sup>th</sup> 1922, after just two years of work. A truly prestigious achievement when you consider the constructive engagement represented by numerous works of art, including the – then - longest tunnel of the entire network, the bridge over the river Lambro, and a decidedly steep path along its entire length.

The terminus of Canzo-Asso and the stops of Canzo, Caslino d'Erba, Pontelambro - Castelmarte and Lezza - Carpesino thus fulfil an ambitious infrastructural project started many decades before, hopefully destined to last much longer given its irreplaceable function as umbilical cord with Milan.

And to think that it is an "unfinished" business, as the original plan was to take the railway line to Bellagio. Anyway, while the latter village was not particularly bothered, Canzo and Asso had a reason to smile, having found themselves in the unexpected role of terminus of those tourist flows that the Belle Époque generously dispensed at least until the outbreak of the First World War.

In 1929 overhead line electrification was installed on the entire line and the old steam engines were definitively replaced by flaming new EB 700 series electric locomotives and towed railcars which, with a long list of variants and descendants, have ensured services until the advent of the modern complex double-decker EMU trains (called TAFs and TSRs) at the start of the new millennium, which still dominate unchallenged the passenger services along the route now run by TRENORD.

The station of Canzo (now an intermediate stop) and the terminus of Canzo-Asso were built during the extension of the line in the early '20s of the last century. Albeit each with a different emphasis in accordance with their functional hierarchy, both show the canons of a sober and elegant Liberty style, fittingly expressing the dignity and importance of public rail services.