



FORMER JESUIT COLLEGE

You can find this point of interest in Como 6 – Stage 1.

INFORMATION

Location: via Lambertenghi

Paving: the street and the square are made of porphyry tiles with two side bands paved in stone

Services: parking not available inside the walled city (except at the Arena in via Vincenzo Bellini 21); urban and suburban bus stops outside the walled city. Municipal Library of Como in Piazzetta Venosto Lucati

Leisure and Catering: bars, cafes and shops of various kinds in the area

Other information: pedestrian area with limited traffic. The structure currently houses the Vincentian Fathers' festive soup kitchen, a Vincentian Family Home, the Open Door offices of the diocesan Caritas, a kitchen service for refugees also from Caritas and the cloakroom service managed by the Conferences of St. Vincent.

DESCRIPTION

(by Silvia Fasana)

Since the second half of the sixteenth century the Jesuits had opened a college at their convent next to the church of SS. Felice and Amanzio (church of the Gesù) that dealt with the education of the young people of the city aristocracy. Two centuries later, the young Alessandro Volta also studied in this college: from 1758 to 1760 he attended the "School of Rhetoric" and began that of Philosophy, attracting the attention of a Jesuit father, Father Gerolamo Bonesi, who tried to convince him to enter the Society of Jesus. But his paternal uncle Don Alessandro, who followed his education after his father's death, withdrew him from the Jesuits and enrolled him in the Benzi Seminary. When, a few years later, in 1773, the Society of Jesus was suppressed, the government, in order not to deprive the city of the prestigious educational institute, immediately arranged to acquire the College and to continue lessons as early as the school year 1774-1775, transforming it into the Royal Gymnasium. Here were held the classes of Grammar, Humanity and Rhetoric; after some uncertainties, the chairs of Logic and Metaphysics, Experimental Physics, Geometry, Natural Law and Moral Philosophy were reactivated, which derived partly from the higher courses created by the Jesuits in their Institute, and partly from the chairs founded in the College of Doctors. As early as 1774 Alessandro Volta had been appointed Regent of the Schools of Como, making himself distinguished for his analytical evaluation of and his proposals for improving public education, thus demonstrating his concern to promote culture and education for young people. In 1755 he was assigned the chair of Experimental Physics in the Royal Gymnasium, which he held until his transfer to the University of Pavia in 1778. In this role, Volta worked hard to create a library endowment to be made available to students, but above all by laying the foundations for organizing a Physics Cabinet, procuring instruments on loan, buying or building them personally or through artisans (*"the local barometer makers"*), also taking care of finding the necessary funds. This Cabinet was to be at the same time a valuable teaching tool for the students (he believed that

the teaching of physics should be engaging, useful and enjoyable at the same time, based on concrete experiences), but also a functional place for the scientist's research. At the same time as the design of the laboratory, Volta introduced important educational innovations including public demonstrations of physics experiences held by students in Italian. In the Napoleonic era, the Royal Gymnasium of Como was transferred to the former monastery of the Augustinian nuns of S. Cecilia; from the school year 1803-1804 the first city high school had also been established in the same building. In 1851 the Gymnasium was merged with the Lyceum into the new Gymnasium-Lyceum (lasting eight years). In 1865 the institute was named after Alessandro Volta, to commemorate the presence of the scientist at the Royal Gymnasium.