

The Serbelloni Family History

A suitable starting point for understanding the importance of the Serbelloni family and its history is the XVI century when Gabriele (1509-1580), known as “il Grande Gabrio”, Captain General of the Papal Guard and, it is said, an arms dealer, a very lucrative profession even back then, started to accumulate fame, glory and riches.

In 1496 his aunt, Cecilia Serbelloni, married Bernardino Medici: this union produced important cousins for Gabrio; Gian Angelo, later elected as Pope Pius IV; Margherita, the future mother of Saint Charles Borromeo and lastly, Gian Giacomo, known as “il Medeghino”, a soldier of fortune who domineered Lake Como and surroundings with his brigands and pirate boats.

Upon the death of the Pope in 1565, Gabrio entered into the service of Philip II of Spain, fighting valiantly under him in the Battle of Lepanto against the Turks in 1571. As a reward, Philip appointed him Spanish Viceroy of Tunis.

Gabrio returned to Milan in 1575. During the plague outbreak there in 1576, he organized aid and assistance to the city because the governor had fled for fear of contagion.

Once the plague had run its course, he went back to his beloved battle fields.

Between 1577 and 1579, he fought against the Flemish and Dutch rebels and took part in the siege and capture of Maastricht.

At age 70 he came home to his native Milan for good, and died there in January of 1580.

In 1741, his descendent, Gabrio III, Duke of San Gabrio (1693-1774), married Maria Vittoria Ottoboni, an exceptionally cultured woman, renown for her political-literary salon.

In 1765 Gabrio started construction on Palazzo Serbelloni on Corso di Porta Orientale (now Corso Venezia). During the same period he bought the Del Carretto villa in Tremezzo on Lake Como known today as Villa Sola Cabiati with the intention of making it the family's summer residence and raising his children there. Gabrio engaged the poet abbot Giuseppe Parini and the great mathematician, Paolo Frisi to tutor his sons; from Parini young Gian Galeazzo (1744-1802) absorbed not only culture and innovative political ideas, but also a taste for things of beauty and art. And it was Gian Galeazzo, together with Architect Cantoni, who in 1793 completed the grandiose construction works on the Palazzo left unfinished when his father died in 1774.

Gian Galeazzo was a leading political figure in Austro-Hungarian Milan. He welcomed General Bonaparte and Josèphine Beauharnais to the city in 1796 and accommodated both in a specially

appointed apartment in Palazzo Serbelloni during their sojourn there. To demonstrate he shared Bonaparte's revolutionary ideas, supposedly he publicly cut off his "pigtail", the symbol of aristocratic society at the time, to the great scandal of the Milanese nobility

Gian Galeazzo married Lady Teresa Castelbarco and had a single daughter, Luigia, born in 1773, thus interrupting the direct descent of the family male line.

In 1789 Luigia married Ludovico Busca Arconati Visconti, V Marquis of Lomagna (1758-1841) and had a child, Carlo Ignazio.

Carlo Ignazio, VI Marquis of Lomagna (1791-1844), had two children, Paolo and Antonio, the latter of whom never married.

Paolo had a child born out of wedlock, Ludovico, whom he made a legitimate heir by means of an Imperial Decree dated 13 April 1851.

Ludovico Busca Arconati Visconti married Clementina Lazarich, a Hungarian woman. From their union, six daughters were born: Antonietta who married Count Andrea Sola; Luisa who married Count Pietro Sormani; Maria, wife of Marquis Gianvico d'Adda; Beatrice who married Marquis Fassati; Ida who became Marquise Stanga and Eugenia who married Marquis Suardi.

Ludovico hoped to have a male heir but the last baby daughter sadly died together with its mother during childbirth. In despair, Lodovico Busca Arconati Visconti committed suicide.

Thus Ludovico died before his unmarried uncle, Antonio Marco (1795-1870) who consequently who inherited the villa on Lake Como. He embellished the ground floor rooms of Villa Sola Cabiati and great staircase with their nineteenth century frescoes.

Upon his death he left his entire estate to the firstborn of the six sisters, his god-child, Antonietta.

Antonietta married Count Andrea Sola Cabiati (1844-1908), a senator in Italy's first Parliament. Four sons were born to them: Nino who died young from diphtheria and whose statue is still in the Palazzo Serbelloni portico; Gian Lodovico; Ferdinando, a bachelor, who perished in World War I and Pier Luigi who left no heirs.

Count Gian Lodovico Sola (1877-1972) married Marquise Alberica Stanga Trecco (1877-1968). They also had four daughters, Amalia, Eleonora, Andreina and Antonietta.

Amalia married Count Gola and Antonietta, Marquis Lalatta. Today these two families are the direct descendants of the original Serbelloni family.

The Family Coat of Arms



The large family crest commemorates some of the many glorious victories attributed to Grande Gabrio. The center of the crest is occupied by the family shield with flags displayed on either side of it. Underneath the family shield are three smaller shields. The crest is draped with the banner of the Church of Rome and surmounted by a Duke's crown.

The shield is divided into six square fields: the 1st and 4th squares show a green tree supported by two red griffins wearing gold crowns and facing one another on a silver field; the 2nd and 5th squares have a red cross on a silver field whereas the 3rd and 6th squares have three red bars on a silver field.

At the center of the shield is a rectangular gold field with a blue rampant stag wearing a crown. Displayed on each side of the shield are three flags.

The top right flag belonging to the Ottoman empire, has 5 crescents and seven stars on a blue and red striped field with the motto *Profligatis Turcis 1574*.

The middle right flag shows a lit torch on a blue and white striped field with the motto *Deletis Aviniorum liberatorum hostibus*.

The bottom right flag shows two hands clasping a purse on a red-bordered white field with the motto *Devictis Ugonottis 1567*.

The top left flag, another one belonging to the Ottoman Empire, has five crescents and Moors' heads on a yellow and red striped field with the motto *Tuneto defenso*.

The middle left flag shows a serpent eating its tail on a yellow-bordered white field with the motto *Confracto Rovanii ducis exercitu 1628*.

The bottom left third flag shows a horn on a blue-bordered white field with the motto *Auriaco expugnato 1562*.

At the bottom of the shield are three smaller ones: the shield of the city of Rome, representing Papal power; the second, the shield of the Order of the Knights of Malta, defenders of Christianity and the Church of Rome, and the third, the shield of the Piedmont city of Asti, would become the Royal Family's coat-of-arms after the unification of Italy.

The Serbelloni heraldic crest is surmounted by the ancient crown of Dukes and draped with the banner of the Church of Rome. Beneath the crown can be seen the crossed silver and gold Papal keys. Lastly, below the three smaller shields are depicted two cannons, arrows, drums and war trumpets, a helmet and spiked maces, all symbols of Grande Gabrio's numerous battles.