

SAN PIETRO ACQUAEORTUS

antico borgo

Roofs, buildings, a bell-gable of a Romanesque church: strength together with beauty and grace are the features of the medieval suburb.

Born as a place of worship and a fortress of faith, turned into a village after nearly seven centuries, and saved from a dramatic destiny of disrepair and destruction to be reborn to a new life.









History

According to the legend, the name of the suburb comes from Saint Peter, prince of the Apostles: on his second trip to Italy, the Saint disembarked in Pisa and, heading to Rome, stopped in this area and accomplished the miracle of making water gush from the rock to administer Baptism.

That's where the term 'aquae ortus' (water source) comes from.

The suburb was actually born in the 11th century as a monastic complex likely built on a preceding pagan sacred place.

The presence of the Abbey of Saint Peter Acquaeortus is mentioned by L. Fumi around the year 1000, when its story is bound to the family of the Farolfingi, who were Earls of Chiusi and Orvieto in the 11th and 12th centuries.



According to the scholar Spicciani, the Abbey was located in a specific site at the south of the plots donated in 1038 by Earl Winildo to the Monastery of Saint Salvatore of Mount Amiata, on the boundary between the two Counties of Chiusi and Orvieto.

In year 1200 the monks of Saint Peter's belonged to the order of the Guglielmites, who were also present in the near hermitage of Santa Maria di Marzapalo in Mount Rufeno's forest, in the hermitage of Loreto, not far from the Castle of Meana, and in the hermitage of Camporsevoli in the neighbouring Tuscan territory.

Historical sources agree that in the 13th century the monks of Saint Peter's belonged to the Order of Cistercians, established in the 11th century with the spirit of returning to a monastic life consistent with the original character of the Benedictine rule, that had gradually lost the traits of austerity and manual work after the Council of Aquisgrana (year 817). The order originated in the Abbey of Cîteaux (in Latin Cistercium) in Burgundy, founded by Robert of Molesme in 1098, and it quickly spread also in Italy where the Abbeys of Fossanova, Casamari, Tre Fontane, and Chiaravalle are still well-known.

Little is known about the Monastery of Saint Peter and its monks during the 14th and 15th centuries. From the end of the 15th century to the early decades of the 16th, its history is bound to the Church of Saint John the Evangelist of the Augustinians from Bologna, located in Orvieto. In 1469 the Monastery was downgraded to a commandry in favour of the noble Enrico Monaldeschi, who renounced it in favour of the Canons Regular of the Lateran; such act was approved by Pope Leo X with a bull dated January 8th, 1517. This is the most complex and troubled period of the history of the church, as it saw Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, whose cornerstone was the Council of Trent (1545-1563), that laid the doctrinal and theological foundation for the religious writs to renovate hierarchy and body of the Catholic Church.

In 1563 the secular clergy took the lead of the church of the suburb from the Canons Regular.



In 1676 the Canons sold the property of San Pietro Acquaeortus to Cardinal Bonelli, and from him it passed to the Sinibaldi family, and then to marquis Girolamo Antinori, with the exception of a “small working plot with a house and a church” that was left to the parish. Between 1768 and 1775 Nicola Antinori sold the plots to Francesco Costarelli, who transmitted them to his descendants.

In 1844 the estate of Saint Peter was purchased by the canon Giovanni Napoleoni from Orvieto and then inherited by Luigi Napoleoni and his sons Giovanni and Paolo who administered it until the early decades of the 20th century.

Between the last decades of the 19th century and the early 20th century the municipalities of Alleronia and Fabro provided the suburb with essential facilities like the road, the school and the cemetery, so that the small community, along with the ensemble of the surrounding farmhouses, maintained a stable population of around two hundred inhabitants.

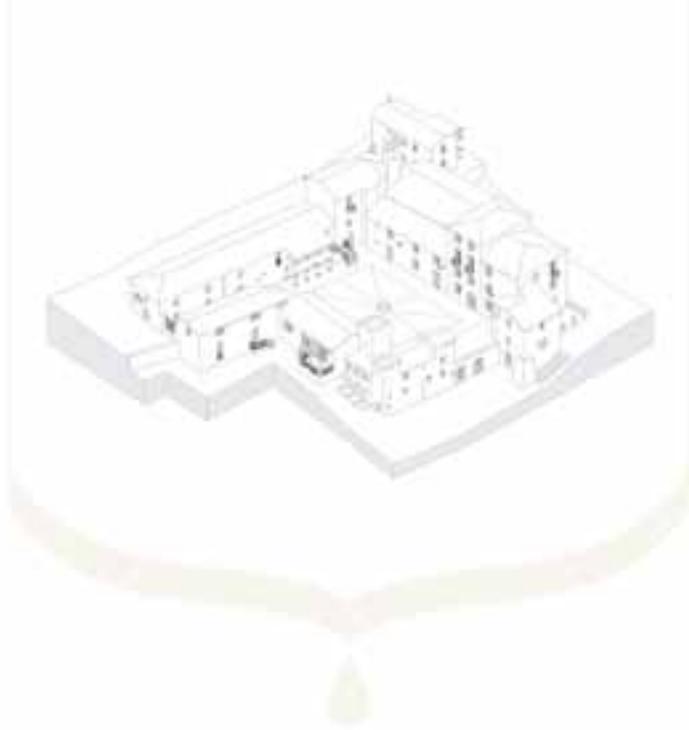
In this perspective the parish continuously played an essential role as a reference point for social aggregation through participation to ceremonies and liturgical rites including the execution of services of the Confraternities.

In the early decades of the 20th century, between the two World Wars, the life of the suburb was tightly connected with the village of Alleronia, where the municipality stands, both for administrative and economical matters. On the occasion of an election Saint Peter indeed had its polling station and a delegate from the community was always nominated among the candidates in the municipality electoral register. The peoples of the two settlements joined each other on the occasion of holidays, and generations of people from Alleronia often used to dwell in Saint Peter during winter and spring seasons dedicated to the works in the woodland.

From the 50's in the 20th century the occurrence of urbanization gradually took manpower away from the countryside to industries and services located in larger cities not sparing this suburb, that according to the census of 1961 already counted only 113 inhabitants, who were almost disappeared at the end of the 70's.

(Historical notes from the book Claudio Urbani, "San Pietro Acquaeortus: profilo storico di un'abbazia e dei suoi ordini monastici", Alleronia 1978)





The project

The Suburb of San Pietro Acquaortus originated from the conversion of the abbey complex established by the monastic order of the Guglielmites in the 11th century and then passed to the Benedictine order. Its name reveals the presence of water sources used by the monks. The primary and original settlement consisted of an ancient square-based tower, likely of Roman origin, against which the monks built the church.

The small conurbation was inhabited until the 60's of the 20th century when, also as a consequence of depopulation of the surrounding countryside under the known circumstance of the sharecropper migration, it underwent a progressive decline until the houses, the school and the church have been gradually covered with plants and brambles.



Since 2005 the entrepreneur Stefano Magini realized the opportunity to develop a great project as he understood that the ancient medieval suburb fallen in ruins could be renovated and turned into a large hospitality complex able to attract floods of tourists to an area of great environmental and natural value, creating development and job opportunities.

From then on, a project of structural reinforcement and architectural renovation was started by the architectural firm Studio Stylos Progetti of architects Donato Borri and Andrea Vagni from Castel Viscardo under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage Agency of Umbria and with the critical support of the Regional Development Agency Sviluppumbria SpA.

The complex was recovered with greatest care for all details: stone by stone, all buildings were dismantled, reinforced and rebuilt with the original materials, fully complying reconstruction rules.

The pride of the complex is definitely the renovation of the medieval church with its sober but magnificent façade and the inside, and above all the small square facing it, where a stone fountain with gushing water was built. The overall look is like a beautiful medieval Italian square in miniature.

It is reasonable to say that the recovery of San Pietro Acquaeortus, along with the recovery of the suburb of Postignano in Valnerina, is the most important work of architectural and functional renovation of an ancient Umbrian suburb both in terms of size and quality of the work.









Stefano Magini

The master builder

Stefano Magini faithfully played the role of a “master builder” of the Middle Ages, as he joined the planning of the renovation of the suburb of San Pietro Acquaeortus and personally supervised the works.

He turned himself into the master of building works managing a team of brick layers and stone workers for the whole five year duration of the venture, day after day, dividing himself among driving the excavator, choosing materials, managing suppliers, banks and public authorities, and financial planning. It was a very demanding but also exciting job, that brought him to show the whole world a somehow miraculous salvation and allows to admire the magnificent results as one gets closer to the suburb and starts recognizing the profile of the buildings.



Very surprising indeed is the harmony of architectural proportions within such a marvellous landscape, and the lightness of the bell-gable silhouetted against clear sky like the mast of a ship setting off again after being aground on the side of a mountain.

Stefano Magini was educated in a very different environment from the one of splendid solitude of the suburb of San Pietro. He was born and grew up in Rome where, after graduating in economics, he worked as an accountant in some of the most prestigious business consulting firms in Rome. His next assignment was to head the Istituto Santa Caterina della Rosa, one of the largest Public Charities in Rome, active in the field of social aid and inclusion of disadvantaged people (drug addicts, poor, needy families, abandoned children or victims of violence, etc).

Due to a number of private reasons he left the chaotic life of the Italian capital to take refuge in the hills of Orvieto and undertake an adventure that seemed almost desperate at the beginning, to rescue and reconstruct the building heritage of San Pietro Acquaeortus.

The courageous vision of the image of the suburb after the renovation led and sustained Stefano Magini across the long journey to achieve the objective.









The suburb today

The settlement is located well up on the slope of the hills of the Park of the Wood of Meana. Going through the road that crosses the park of Villalba with its centuries-old oaks and trees and connects the cities of Fabro and Alleron, its profile can be easily recognized as you get closer.

However, its beauty and its charm are fully disclosed only when you drive through the narrow lane flanked by high cypresses that leaves the national route and reaches the gate, where you suddenly feel like you are thrown into a different age. Stones, columns, archways, the bell and the brook bring you in a spectacular dreaming atmosphere and allow to leave modern life disorder and chaos behind you.



Twenty-five housing units of various size were created in the suburb in order to satisfy the needs of a wide variety of customers who are offered the possibility to reside in “ancient rooms” supplied with all mod cons (wi fi connection, satellite antenna and flat screen television).

Guests will be able to experience complete calmness in such an oasis of well-being.

The facility includes a restaurant and a congress hall both located inside the medieval church, whose inside was renovated in order to host novel tasks. In addition, an outdoor swimming pool with natural massaging water jets coming out of stone, an indoor wellness centre with a small sea water pool for thalassotherapy, a fully equipped fitness centre and a wine bar with outdoor garden terrace are also at disposal.

The wide inner square of the suburb is the ideal location for exhibits, concerts, vernissages, cocktails and shows.

The outdoor area, designed by a landscape architect, has been “furnished” with plants, flowers, fruit trees typical of the Umbrian countryside, and “forgotten” essences, thanks to an accurate flower archaeology study.

Naturalist paths with relaxing areas provided with wooden garden seats have been designed in order to let guests relax, talk and enjoy direct contact with nature.









The territory

The suburb of San Pietro Acquaeortus is geographically located in the northern part of the territory of Orvieto, well up on the slope of the hills of the Park of the Wood of Meana, an area that is very rich in still unexploited environmental and historical-architectural resources of greatest value, and strategically connected with northern Latium and the southern part of the territory of Siena.

Such a fortunate location allows to quickly reach tourist destinations of great interest: in Tuscany, the thermal station of San Casciano dei Bagni, the Val d'Orcia and the medieval pearls of Maremma Toscana (Pitigliano, Sorano, and Sovana); in Latium, the lake of Bolsena, Viterbo and the Viterban Tuscia; in Umbria, the suburb is very close to Orvieto, with its marvellous attractions among which the Cathedral stands as the most magnificent jewel; moreover, Perugia, Assisi, Città della Pieve, the lake Trasimeno with its medieval villages, are also easy to reach.



An endless range of opportunities for lovers of culture and art, but also for people who enjoy living well and eating well, in a fully relaxing atmosphere where it is possible to restore and be in strict contact with nature.

Luckily, in recent years the northern part of the territory of Orvieto has seen a growth in tourism and in the exploitation of natural and landscape resources.

The Suburb of Parrano is reborn thanks to a great project of integrated development of the area including hospitality, thermal wellness, wine production and sport activities like a 18-hole golf course.

The Castello della Sala, magnificent mansion of the Marquises Antinori, is surrounded by one of the most prestigious vineyards in the region.

In the near village of Montegabbione it is possible to visit La Scarzuola, a very original “ideal” town with magic and esoteric features built by architect Tommaso Buzzi.

More hospitality facilities, like carefully renovated farmhouses and mansions, are being given a new life thanks to people who are in love with the unique charm of these places.

Borgo San Pietro Acquaeortus (elevation 650 meters) is located at 12 minutes from Allerona (Terni) and at only 15 minutes from the tollgate of Fabro (motorway A1)

Surrounding historical and tourist destinations of value:

- Rome (1 h 15 minutes)
- San Casciano dei Bagni (15 minutes)
- Orvieto (30 minutes)
- Mount Amiata
- Lake of Bolsena



Stefano Magini

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Borgo San Pietro Acquaeortus

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