

A history from far away.

“Everyman has his own story, and a hotel, to accommodate him, has to have its own.”

Alright: I am beautiful. “I was wooden, dwelled, staged, and let me tell you: I am to this day the pride of the neighborhood. But I mean: of the city. It was when you saw my lights, the elegance of my features, the quality of the materials used, the solidity of my structure: all the elements that until this day can ascertain. So much so that when they talk about, Ricci and Zucchini, in their *“Guida di Bologna”* (Bologna Guidebook), they write: in the XIV-XV century...it is one of the few houses in the city that has preserved its antique wooden column portico; the façade is in gothic style. The characteristic of the side facing Via Oberdan, the circular light under the window.” But not enough: even if I can appear a little more vainglorious, I’d like to think about what Alfonso Rubbiani has said about me. It was him who supervised the operation when, in 1905, my proprietor Lodovico Rubini consented to the request from a committee for historic and artistic Bologna to undergo a careful and in-depth care of “rejuvenation,” of recovering my youthful physiognomy. Once, during the decoration of Saint Peter’s Church, Rubbiani recalled my story and illustrated the choices made to restore me, defined me as: “certainly an important building in the history of old Bologna” and of our antique architecture. “One of those small but appealing monuments that allows us to relive in the lanes of Bologna” was constructed with the spirit of the era. And he continued: “it was a noble small house, outlived the ruins of thousands of its contemporaries and lasted firmly on its oak trunks as if it had set aside a grateful information to pass on to distant posterity that the previous generations had left behind. The house is the type that has an apartment on top of the portico. The vertical oak trunks, raised above the selenite base, support the Y-shaped frame with its limbs and branch, with a human-like gesture...”

Five pointed-arch windows, damaged, closed, wounded, but preserved a great part of the firm brick arch and decorated in hand-cut terracotta, located in front and restored. And the setting recurrent under that constructed in bricks in the shape of an intense romantic outline; a meter away there were connections glued to the house, precious fragment that would allow a reliable refurbishment of an essential molding for a good restoration of the small monument.

As long as the scaffolding were not raised, many doubts would remain regarding the side from which the house faces to *Vicolo degli Albari* to watch the passersby on *Via Cavaliera*, a road that also had great importance in ancient times.

But if touched by hammers, the recent plasterworks would crumble leaving uncovered the most ample and noble window of the antique house, from which the beautiful and generous women of the *Azzoguidi* would have attempted out of the blues and there, in the main street, to meet some eye candies. The luxurious ferrule made of cardoon leaves skillfully cut in arched brick, even if in bad shape, would not have lost some necessary elements for refurbishment. To the side, under the windowsill, one of the slits came to light to spy on the anxious expectations outside or to welcome in the unsafe nights, some breaths of air that was very common in the medieval houses...

A life between the towers

You heard? Certainly those that inside the “shoulders” (pardon: the walls!) has an ancient history like mine and has seen all the colors and can be well considered “noble” – from the urban and architectural perspective – of the city. At a certain point in its life, there comes the thirst to recall, relive the adventures, recall the people who were nearby, with those who has walked a part of life.

When I was built, as you have heard, it was late medieval period: the 1300s and forgive me –given my age – for not remembering the exact year. However, I remember vividly the times. Bologna in that moment was a jungle of towers under which, us, resident houses grew up protected, proud of our wood porticos, of our windows often decorated in terracotta tiles, and the curves that connect us. Life, certainly, was not easy for everybody: students from every part poured into *Alma Mater Studiorum* and rendered lively, sure, but also agitated the community a bit, which was already busy with commerce and a series of small productive activities; the political sequences and factions were more than ever ignited and relocate us, often, further to the families of this or that part; there were also their belongings, their houses.

This where I was raised was still in the heart of the city: from above the towers were watching me, the memories and names belonged to the history, not only architectural, but of Bologna: the *Guiozagni* tower and the *Uguzzoni* tower were erected in the 200s; the *Prendiparte*, as everybody called it, “*Coronata*” (crown) for the shape of its peak; the *Altabella* (tall and beautiful), well deserved definition, with 60 meters of height: its true name, however, was *Azzoguidi*. The history of my life has quiet a lot of importance because we – if one can say – were from the same family.

When they renovated me (at the beginning of this century, like I mentioned) I sure enough appeared extremely fragmented and motif polychrome to the decorations of the porticos’ tiles: among these, one can easy identify and clearly read a code of arms with the rhombus diagonal line that (the *Carrati* said) were brought here by the *Azzoguidi* and *Maccagnano* families, “the branch disconnecting itself from the *Azzoguidi* log maybe in the XIV century, to insist the name *Maccagnano* emerging from the *Azzoguidi* family.”

This code of arms traced back many centuries, even without certainty, was a good proof that the desire for my construction could be from one of the members from this very noble family. I would very much like it if it was like this because in the presumable years of my birth there were among them all types of this kind. Let’s take *Maccagno* from the *Azzoguidi* family, so-called “*signore*”, lived in the first half of the XIV century and in 1311 was sent to king *Roberto d’Angio* as an ambassador, considering that *Maccagno di Bibliobarisio Azzoguidi* was a general of *Taddeo Pepoli*, a nobleman of Bologna, and in 1338 was sent to Pope Benedict XII to reassure him on *Taddeo’s* intentions of being loyal to the Church, then named a “*legista scientissimus*”. Maybe it was one of them who wanted me to be constructed in that area to hedge the houses, courtyards, towers of another famous Bolognese family, the *Albari*, which was the name one of the streets that surrounded me.

There are documents to prove what *Guidicini* and *Gozzadini* (to Bologna history, they are the two “bigs”) claim: “they establish a group of houses, towers, little houses, bridge houses, courtyard of the *Albari*”; here in the area between *San Nicolo Church*, *Via Cavalliera* (or *Cavalliera* or *Cavagliera*, depends on spelling) and *Via Altabella*, and actually *Guidicini* indicates the house number 1616 (keep this number in mind because in my “saga” this number commands extreme importance) of *Via Cavalliera* as a medieval entrance to the

houses of the *Albari*, which were equipped with two strong and beautiful towers, vanished by a piece, the tower of *Ugolino Uguzzoni*, then *Ludovisi* and in front of this tower on the street of *San Nicolo church*, another tower of the *Lodovisi* and then the *Magnai*. Given that I lived a good part of the first centuries of my existence side by side (well, wall to wall, let's say) with the furniture of this well-known surname, I can say that from the second half of the XIII century, in the period with the most conflicts that brought victory to the *Guelfa* family and the people, I saw the *Albari* go, announced to be part of the *Lambertazza* or *Ghibellina*, that – in the conflict between the Pope and Empire, favoring the latter. It was clear that not everybody from the family thought the same way because, for example, an *Andrea* from the *Albari* was among the *Geremei*, the Pope's supporter that went to Boniface VII offering him accommodation in Bologna.

The *Geremei* or *Lambertazzi*, were anyway the *Albari*, were a rich and powerful family; I can assure you that. A proof? In 1257, in the emancipation act of the serfs, those that were freed from the *Albari* family were 137. Not a small number! Another proof? The church. The beautiful little church one glimpsed from my windows was called, indeed, *San Nicolo degli Albari* because they were the patronage.

When you read what *Antonio Masini* wrote in his "*Bologna perlustrata*" (Bologna Tested!) in 1666: *San Nicolo* was an ancient church "one believes that it could be one of those, in 1336 during the period of *San Basilio* Bishop of Bologna, that were built and designated for Parish and in 1256, *Alidosio* mentioned it as the 'noble things'".

And in "*Indicatore Bolognese*" (Bologna Indicator, written by *Sebastiano Gaetano Giovannini* and printed in 1854 in typography of *Antonio Chierici* of *San Domenico Press*) that recaptured this parichial church "was ancient even before 1256 and maybe built by *San Basilio* our Bishop in 1336, was already from the *Albari* family that were the patrons before the church became *Jus de Parrocchiani*, which was rebuilt with illustration of *Nicolo Barella*, now known as *Sussidiale della Parrocchia di San Pietro*".

There were always a lot of people praying in this little church that then found themselves in the middle of a beautiful street (but I will tell you more about it later), which was among the liveliest and busiest in terms of quality and quantity of commercial activities and businesses. For a very long time, in this little parichial church the arm of *Apostle Matteo* was preserved here exposed to veneration of faithfuls and declared plenary indulgence on the 7th of September, 1621 by Pope Gregory XV. Now, the relics is no longer there, but in *San Nicolo Church* one can admire authentic works of arts like the *Madonna "in assa"* from the 1300s, the *San Antonio of Giuseppe Maria Crespi*, the *Arcangelo Michele of Bartolomeo Passarotti*, and the *Crocefisso con la Madonna* (Crucifix with Mary) attributed to *Tiburzio Passarotti*.

But let's return to the 1600s, do you have any idea who much it cost, in those years, for a building like mine? *Guidicini* informed us: on the 25th of January, 1663 *Arrigo Arrigoni* purchased from *Defendo* and *Antonio Locatelli* a big house and other smaller houses (indeed the former houses of *Albari*) for 12,500 liras.

My value increased rapidly because the street engaged in tons of artisanal and commercial activities.

I, alone, was sold by *Giovan Battista Arrogoni* for 9,200 liras! It was a certain *Matteo Ferranti* who bought me: the deed was signed by notary *Lodi* on the 31st of January, 1705 and along with a report from an expert, *Costa*, it was his last name as *Arrigoni*, *Ferranti* and *Dorotea Fiorenzi Sacenti* appointed him with mutual consent. From *Costa*, one can find out

about my special physiognomy from those days; there were: stable, bakery and warehouse together, and I bordered with *Via Cavagliera* on one side, on the other with “the goods of the *Malvezzi*”, the houses of the *Giovagnoni* on the third side, and lastly by an “adjacent dead little street”.

The apartment had on the ground floor a loggia, two bedrooms, two living rooms, a kitchen, “another room with an entrance to the loggia and is always used as an office”; then there was a small courtyard and a big courtyard, both had a well. Even if the notarial style added weights to the descriptions, it seemed interesting for me to see my “privacy” by reading my “past”.

Alright, here is how our notary *Lodi* proceeded, in that January of 1705: “there were a stable connected to a warehouse and a bakery that received lights from the streets that goes through *Via San Pietro*, and an old bakery to store grain. Climbing up the stairs, the door that opens to an apartment which has a loggia that gets lights from the big courtyard, three rooms from the front part, two of which get lights from the street and the others from the little dead street, another room receives lights from the small courtyard and the small street, a kitchen and two other rooms attached (with windows) to the big courtyard, two rooms near the grain storage facing the street, which were on top of four stepladders, and there is still another small room on top, a bedroom used as an office, then there are a big grain storage for wheat and two other ones, one for the broken and damaged beams but supported by the part underneath then there are two cellars without drains for the lack of aqueducts, something for the whole structure; there are no turrets”.

In my rooms, there was great energy because *Matteo Ferranti*, the new owner, had four sons, and if *Agostino*, the oldest, after getting married, lived on his on under the parichial church of *San Biagio*; the others: *Giovanni Battista*, *Bernaardo* (who was a priest), and *Domenico* – lived here with the dad and all had a good group of friends; therefore, the courtyards and rooms were always full of people. Until 1733, on the 23rd of August, *Matteo Ferranti* died, *Agostino* the oldest son was authorized “to sell and pause all goods and stuff, and all the money will be spent on masses and offerings in intercessions of testament souls.”

It passed just like that by hands. New faces, the *Broglia* became the new owner when the city lived in a period of great changes and new interests.

Treccoli, zavagli, and....

It is essential to day that a street, *Via Cavaliera*, was truly “in”. I can show you that: from the acts of *Uffcio* and *Ornato* (can be dated to 1732 and 1736) indicate that *Via Cavaliera* was considered “first grade street, with the total length of 145.30 perticas” and the owners of the buildings are responsible for the perpetual maintenance and restorations of various stores, according to an assigned tax based on the established price for every pertica, price changes – one can say – yearly. But for its truly central location and distinguishing itself from the market – *Mercato di Mezzo* – in *Via Cavaliera*, more structures and activities were inserted that today would be called “touristic”. It is *Mario Fanti*, in his “*Le vie di Bologna*” (The Streets of Bologna) supports that it is logical to think “on *Via Cavaliera*, or *Via Cavallaria*, that is the street where there are stalls or horse stables”, also considering that “some streets, like those of *Via Cavaliera*, derived from *Mercato di Mezzo* (now *Via Rizzoli*), there were delivery, arrival, and departure points for couriers, merchants, and passerby.

Such traffic, as it is obvious, involved exclusively with the four-legged animals and tourists in inns demanding that there should be numerous adequate stalls for animals...”

Hence, the street that I considered to be mine developed slowly to what you, humans, called “service sector vocation”: showing particularly adapted to hosting – often in clear manner, in the open, in a way that was similar to the practices of a nearby market in *Piazzola*, which was almost my contemporary – commercial initiatives, transport activities, and public services.

Everything was lively: along the big doors of the noble families, there were the *treccole* and *zavagli*. Excuse me. Of course! You cannot know of whom and what I am talking about. Well, the *treccole* were the small venders and minute merchants of essential goods, and *zavagli* were the true and typical secondhand dealers from whom the people could find thousands of objects, used or new.

As I liked to document the things that I tell (so they do not think that my stories are bluff or fantasies of a constant dreamer and a little megalomaniac), so here was the identikit of *Via Cavaliere* in 1758. In the State Archive of Bologna, one finds a handwritten census of samples and spaces commissioned to some of its experts from *Assunteria d’Ornato*, before “verify the measurements of all streets and surface relative perticas of every owner involved, to then assign a tax of maintenance or restoration”. The handwritten document reads: “On the left (n. 1468-1469) under the portico of *Palazzo del Senatore Spada*, *Domenica Ghirardi* sells bread, and this space takes up all the light between the columns (11 step long) with basket full of bread on top of a small wall and a place where he sits. Second, under the same portico, *Anna Maria Montanari*, a *trecola*, stays to occupy all the lights between the third intercolumns with benches for other baskets and chairs. On the fifth intercolumn is *Antonio Amati*, seller of old books and sacred images with a cord to hang Saints, papers, and prints; inside the walls there were also other stands and chairs. At the end, the sixth intercolumn, *Giovanni Battista Marini* presents his playing cards, books, fire rocks, and nails for ordering at his stand. To the left (n. 1466): *Conte Pilla’s* house corner of *Vicolo di San Simone*, there are four stores: the first one belongs to *Giacomo Bini* managed by tailor *Geminiano Gambari*; the second store is *Angela Franceschini* (secondhand dealer); *Paolo Donzeczchieri* sells bread, iron, and less valuable goods in the third one; the fourth one belongs to *Reverend Madri di S. Ludovico ed Alessio*. Still on the left: in *Senatore Magnani’s* house, there is barber *Domenico Gandini’s* store, then *Giuseppe Belvederi* sews and repairs shoes. *Giovanni Bacchetti*, while his workers, with benches, take up all the lights of the portico; in *Andrea Piedivilla’s* house there is a space managed by *Alessio Fiori*. In *Monte Matrimonio’s* building, there are three stores: one of tailor *Ludovico Palazzi*, the secondo of a milliner with a cordon and jib workshop behind, the third one is *Giuseppe Celsi’s* hardware store, with both already made irons and to be made irons occupying the entire portico. In *Senator Magnani’s* other house, there are two shops managed also by *Celsi* where he keeps iron, coppers, and equipment everywhere, under the portico on top a small wall, on the ground. To the right (n. 1616: where Hotel Corona D’Oro will be), the *Brogli’s* house, without portico, is *Giuseppe Giusti’s* store where he keeps equipment for this profession inside and out as well as irons and other things that he needs. In the small street behind *San Nicolo Church*, under the portico, *Benedetto Rizzi*, a carpenter, has piles of timber inside the wood pillars. In the *Piani sisters’* property, the corner of *Alta Bella* street, there are three stores: the first store managed by bed-maker *Gio. Antonio Bettini* occupying the street with a pair of rack (lacking of portico); the second, to

trecolo (small merchants) *Bartolomeo Landi* which uses the store as a warehouse; the third to *Gio. Domenico Campanelli*, spice merchant.

To the left (n. 1462) the *Tubertini's* building, there are two stores managed by *Landi* and the third, very big, designated as a bakery. To the right (n. 1418): behind the walls of *Osteria della Pigna*, property of *Real Collegio di San Clemente di Spagna*, *Giovanni Vaccari* a *zavagli* (secondhand dealer) takes the place with a bench and many small things occupying the street. The same *zavagli Vaccari* also takes under the vault with a bench and cash register in *Vicolo S. Giobbe*. To the left (n. 1460): in *Giacomo Giovannini's* house, without portico, there is shoemaker *Giacomo Rossi*; after him, all the way to *Mercato di Mezzo*, there are another three stores managed by artisans without sign or stands."

I also remember many of my neighbors during that time: *Teresa Pegrazzi Spisa*, poor little one, in a miserable store and badly lit, just right before *Via Limbo*, sold shoes, belts, and leather; and *Cesare Mattioli* who had a butcher shop selling fat and bones, after *Vicolo Purgatorio*; further down at the corner of *Piazzetta S. Simone*, *Giuseppe Matle* worked night and day to weave, saw, and wrap straw hats. I remember *Giuseppe* really well because he was a joker: with the little spare time that he had, he usually went to *quajoner* (do not be angry, here in Bologna, *quajoner* means "to make fun of") his friend *Camillo Baldi*, selling fat here in the corner, or contrived jokes that would victimized good man like *Mauro Garuti*, the shoemaker. Oh, there was also a shipping company here: located right after the *piazzetta* that many loved to call "*del Senatore Spada*" (Senator Spada) managed by the wives of *Sormani* and *Compagni* who greatly handle printed leather goods and leather.

One osteria attracts another

It is not difficult to imagine the fever, humanity and vivacity of this small world, which is already exposed to (beyond ancient professions and productions) new "arts". It is even easier to understand why many people would have the idea of creating an *osteria*, *locanda*, hotels, wine bars: here the Bolognese characteristics bring them together to chat and drink a glass of wine, play a good game of cards. Moreover, the presence of foreign students increased the inclination and necessity to frequent these communal refreshment places, pastime, and why not, guzzle.

"Learnt" but also "fat", Bologna for a long time enjoys its fame in this sense, the splendor of its gastronomy and cuisine went beyond the Savena and Reno rivers. And travellers? The pilgrims and *romei* (pilgrim like groups) that passed by Bologna, and stopped here maybe without edible comfort and refine accommodation? Then came the diplomats, nobles, teachers, and scholars. It did not take a genius to think about; in fact, they all thought about it and put up *osterias* and *locandas*. Right around my corner, the building that led to *Via Cavaliere* with the number 1616 (remember that I have underlined it for you?), there was a one-story house, whom property was divided between *Broglia* and *Pietro Bignami*: the ground floor was used for making wickers, and there was also a store managed by a lathe turner. Still they were not talking about the eventual "hotel destination" ...But in the house down the road, towards *Mercato di Mezzo*, in the mid 1800s, *Locanda della Pigna* was full of activities, and making it bigger by connecting two spaces to the *osteria*, expanding their business by a lot and becoming competitor to *Rodolfo Pezzoli*, who was managing *Via degli Albari* in the stable of the *Babini* family, another *osteria*. *Pezzoli*, however (I have to tell this, even if I seem to be a bit noisy) had some other thing for this head: a great love, *Mariana*, tall, olive color skin, indifferent to *Rodolfo* sentiments. *Mariana* did a profession

that still exists today: wrapping and cooking chestnuts in the street corner with a fireplace. The Bolognese legislator prescribed a precise name for the *focconi*: they could not overstep the size of the columns and they could only burn coal for not making smoke and cause inconvenience to the neighbors and passersby.

The true pride hotel of the street, in those days, was the *Locanda di Marino*, number 1618, and the true merit – as said – was the manager, *Gaetano Franceschelli*, a man with a farmer background (originally from *S. Giovanni in Parsiceto*), full of kindness and gifted with good sense for business, and his place became extremely well-known and attended.

Also *Petronio Fabbi*, a host of *Osteria della Pigna* and knew his work: by then his practice had an entrance to *Mercato di Mezzo*, and therefore packed with costumers, and they could always find good wine and well made season dishes from him.

1865: “Corona” was born

Since the area was “going” well, a certain *Agostino Torati* came up with an idea of opening his own *locanda* with an *osteria*. Where? In the property of the *Broglia*, number 1616 on *Via Cavaliere*: preparing, in retrospective, a new destiny for me. Indeed, in the license application that *Torati* requested from the *Ufficio d’Igiene Comunale* on the 30th of April, 1865, indicating that the street, according to the layout, was very central and “a grand concourse of people”; however, keeping in mind that about 80 meters away, *Il Locanda di Marino* was already open and there were no schools or boarding schools near by. The license, granted to *Agostino Torati*, on the 20th of May by city commission. *Osteria* with *locanda* (second category business) began its business activities in the building besides me. An activity that I followed, in all senses, closely then concluded as union between me and the “*Corona d’Oro*” (this was a new name for business), between my ancient nobility and its young entrepreneur, between my elegant and timid structure lived through many, many centuries and its dynamic adaptability to necessities and the fast occurring times. But let us not jump to the conclusions quickly because in between there was a long sequence of men, big and small events in history.

So, let us get back to the spring of 1865, when the Italian Unification was only a lustrous life and the “*Corona d’Oro*” was taking its first steps. The work – I clearly saw through my five pointed-arch windows – left true hope for the better: chosen wine, from the Bolognese hills, attracted many clientele that our *Agostino*, after a few months of opening when fall has just arrived, astutely asked to prolong the opening hours for at least one more hour, with a vision of future Carnival “comfortably – explain his request – to both tourists and critics in the audience”.

In fact, Bologna was known for joyful and lavish festivals, the magnificent mask parade, the beautiful theaters that played dramas, comedies, concerts: there was always great energy in the streets and *Torati* hoped to at least imitate his colleague *Anna Roffi* under *Albergo Brun* was managing *Osteria dell’Ubersetto* and was able to keep it open until 3 in the morning (but only when *Locanda Villa di Londra* on *Via San Felice* hosted dance parties). Instead, the permit that *Torati* negotiated meanwhile arrived in one of those winters to remember, but cold...And very long. The streets were semi-paralyzed by copious snow and people did not have the courage to go out. Right after sunset, work traffic ended, streets became desert; dark, silence, and danger of being assaulted by criminals, disrespecting the security forces. So, the poor host *Agostino*, did not work for many hours, except for the morning. Business cut down to the bone and he, covered in debts, ended his business of

osteria e locanda "Corona d'Oro" in April of 1866. Taking over his place was *Luigi Ghelli*: he was not a beginner, having already managed a *locanda* on *Via Oleari* n. 620. But an infective illness struck, and he too stopped every activity after seven months: beautiful spaces, well ventilated, served by a big cellar that seemed to be made for helping us keep good wines and delicious salami; revived after two years of abandonment. Complete closure. But the area was always popular with people from elsewhere (today one would say "economical workers") from students to *Bolognesi*, whose work paid good money, wanted to enjoy a little more.

Bonaventura Andreoli understood this: he and his wife – *Angiola Tugnoli* – had great experience: from 1859 they had a hand in an *osteria con locanda* (*L'Aurora*) on *Via Fusari*; then renamed it *l'Osteria Due Torri*. In 1867, they requested and obtained a license transfer from *l'Osteria Due Torri* to "*Corona d'Oro*". It was also joy for me (for many centuries, they had put a lot on my shoulders, now I was lived by the 'good' people of fin de siècle Bologna) watching the return of business movements and life of *Via Cavaliere*. At night, through the walls, the voices of clients, toasting sounds of glasses, quartered liters, bottles. *Bonaventura* was someone that had authentic vocation for his profession and distinguished himself from his colleagues because he proposed his specialties: high quality wines accompanied by his own *salumi*, snails. He also had another good idea: instead of communal water, he served tables with waters from doctor *Michele Gagliardi*, who produced medicines and refreshments; purgative water was only a few steps away, in the building of *Marchese de' Buoi*, at *Piazza San Martino*. As for wine, when fall arrived, a small table is placed outside "*Corona d'Oro*", written "we don't sell new wine".

Smart right! Because on the city walls, in designated placed, it read announcements released by the *Real Delegato Straordinario* prohibiting the use of new wine, worrying about damages to public hygiene derived from this because "many tons of heterogeneous substance that are kept suspended until complete fermentation". *Bonaventura* had good personal traits, always ready, and knew how to please people. He did not envy any of his colleague, not even *Giovanni Mandroni*, just a few meters away, at the corner of *Via Mercato di Mezzo*, managing a *locanda-osteria "La Pigna"*, first category business. The constant smiles exchanged for friend-rival relationship that they went together to renew their licenses at the municipal headquarter, they had to not only possess, but also show. The duty threatened on everything from "hotels, *trattorie*, *osterie*, *locande*, *café*, and other establishments and stores which sells wine, beers, liquors, refreshments, and other beverages, or stores with public billiard rooms or any other legal games, hygienic establishments and public bathrooms", under the penalty to forfeit business power. *Giovanni* served as witness while *Bonaventura* placed the cross as his signature (because he was illiterate).

One year, they decided to expand their work to *Via delle Lame*. So much so that they heard praises about the *friggione* factory launched by *Adelaide Simoni*! They tasted the specialty and agreed that it fully merited the praises; therefore, *Andreoli* added this to his *osteria*, among with the other dishes. *Cesare Poluzzi* brought him bread, the baker who delivered big basket of bread in the store's basement and exited preferably from an entrance on *Via dell'Inferno*.

October of 1870, in our neighborhood, it was a coming and going of innkeepers, managers, hoteliers: management changes, to say the least, unintelligible. *Bonaventura* could not understand the reasons for this, given that his closest competitors were all working (at

least that what they said) with good clientele and no particular debts. And he remained with almost only plaster to see *Raffaele Ferlotti* loaded furniture on to two small wagons and abandoned *l'Albergo-ristorante "Il Marino"*, after having consigned the license to countess *Ernesta Bacinetti*. *Raffaele* escaped, and instead *Luigi Rubbini* opened a new *bettola* (dive) two doors away and in the same building. Also on *Via Alberi*, in just one year, *Giacomo Fortis*, *Raffaele Negrini*, and *Mauro Cesari* alternatively managed the *osteria* in April, June, and October respectively. *Bonaventura* continued to not understand. Did these people think that money just came in from the window? That the opening hours were not exhausting? That in the cold months the constant clientele would not reduce to half? Money to patch the plasters of the rooms, to change the bed pallets, to restock glasses that are most frequently broken, and essential to have a stockpile of them. He knew the uncertainty of the profession. The countess *Bacinetti* – knew then – spent some good words from an acquaintance, *Gaetano Paggi* – to sell him *"Il Marino"*. One morning, as the day ended the sounds of hammers and chisels were clearly heard, stairways opened then closed, then the voices of people stopping by to comment.

Emblems and references

On the arch of the entrance door to the store, there was a sign made of zinc with dark blue background and white letters: *"Birreria"* (pub). The emblem attracted attention from pedestrians, the efficient advertisement incentive was soon copied by other stores on the street: *Gaetano Massarenti* posted a white iron band that read *Caffè della Corona*, the *Matteuzzi* family hung up a big sign written with *"Sartoria"* (tailor); *Gaetano Avoni* with a small table written *"Macelleria di manzo e vitello"* (Beef and veal butchershop); *Cenacchi e Stagni*: *"Merceria"* (sewing goods)...Only first grade businesses (on *via Cavaliere*, there were: *l'albergo ristorante del Marino*, *il Caffè della Corona*, and *la Locanda della Pigna*), the municipale Police Office granted perpetuation of opening hours, during public balls and dancing parties. *Hotel Corona d'Oro*, since paying only 14 liras of annual taxes, was considered a fourth grade business, therefore, excluded.

By constantly hearing people talked about *osteria*, *locanda* and *birreria*, anyone would be curious to know how many there were in the city.

Good: here it is, satisfied.

In 1875, there were 964, between resellers of liquors, wines, *birreria*, billiards, caffè, restaurants, dives, *trattorie*, *osterie*, *locande*, and hotels.

And since I am interested in only what surrounded me, I tell you that, just here on *Via Cavaliere*, one could choose among *Il caffè di Ferdinando Guglielmi*, the liquor store of *Teresa Fabbri*, *Hotel Corona d'Oro*, *Raffaele Ferletti's bettola*, and *birreria* of *Tomao Legat*, an a newly arrived man from Trieste. The *Corona d'Oro* was the only hotel of the street and had great clientele. Remembering when they all talked about it around here: at *Corona d'Oro*, a lot of foreigners rented the rooms and among these was an extremely distinguished English couple. Before leaving Bologna, in their last walk – today it would have been for shopping – they entered *Pietro Marchesini's* store, a few steps from the hotel and bought a straw hat for him and fur hat for her: the store's emblem had already attracted them: a beautiful black top hat written "Shaft of hat and lemon with the same application can be used for any drape".

Hence, things in the street were going well, so the *Andreoli*, the owners of *Corona D'Oro* had in mind, like they say, a "jump in quality": in 1876, *Bonaventura* and *Angiola* transformed

definitively the social explanation of “hotel and restaurant”. It was truly a great business: three rooms on the ground floor, a reserved room on the second floor, and fourteen bedrooms “decoratively furnished”. And in this period, even my empty spaces became part of the hotel: clientele increased; there were always more demands and the *Hotel Corona d’Oro* “expanded” also in my surrounding where –I lived – (as I remembered and also written) the famous *Baldassarre Azzoguidi* was the first, in 1470, introduced the art of printing to Bologna. In my place, under the portico, just beside the abandoned mangle, *Angiola* kept a *bettola*. Also her, for her profession it has been well blended!

In the cellar, in the basement annexed to the back shop, proudly storing a pair of *Tinazzi* wines and a series of barrels, which the famous *Francesco Bastia* made a custom art in big rooms of houses on *Via Pietralata*. In the drought years, when the long drought reduced pressing potential, they must import the left-over pressed grapes from “outside the walls”, and from there obtained a low demand wine, which sold without difficulty since it cost very little. Having changed social explanation, in the winter, *Angiola* decided to purchase a Prussian style heater from *Enrico Mengoli*, a maker on *Via Mazzini*. The husband *Bonaventura* did not want to give less of an effort to the *Corona d’Oro*, he obtained a good sum of money and brought elegant fireplaces, which were placed in the rooms to make them more comfortable. Then he furnished cabaret floor for restaurant and cafeteria services.

Now, entrepreneurs and professionals are among the regular guests of the hotel, a solid middle class, lovers of privacy and comfort. Those who ordered special dishes, culinary sophistications, vintage wine bottles were served with the best care and attention because a few steps away the *Latteria Sociale Modenese* was a store full of national wines and liquors, a not far away *Geremia Viscardi* offered a wide range of glorious national products. Egg pasta, *tortellini*, *tagliatelle* “of the nun” were made at the artisanal workshop of the *Zambelli* brothers, just after the *San Nicolo Church*, under the first arch of *Giovannini’s* house.

In autumn, now the old *Bonaventura*, after lunch and dinner used the offering of chestnut on the elegant majolica shelf (work of the *Minghetti*) delivered from a store on *Via Cavaliere* number 1. So, success after success, improvement after improvement, the winter of 1887 arrived, which was long and cold. *Bonaventura* became ill of bronchial pneumonia. He called his wife: “*Angiola* – he said – sell everything you can and return to your family. Our children can take care of themselves”. When *Bonaventura* died, *Angiola* passed words to some agents who frequently visited the restaurant, and one night she met *Enrico Avoni*, cattle merchant. He went up the stairs, entered the rooms, took into account the general status of the building, and the next morning, money in hand, concluded the purchase of the *Hotel Corona d’Oro* and of *osteria ristorante*, approved by the Chambers of Commerce on the 3rd of February, 1888. The management change altered the hotel’s future, of which the history continued to be a story of a couple. Infact, *Avoni’s* wife, *Carolina Golfieri*, came to manage the *osteria* called “*della Tinaia*” on *Via San Nicolo*, selling unpackaged wines and wine bottles at mythical prices and served “economical home food”.

When, five years later on the 13th of June 1893, *Enrico* died, *Carolina* succeeded and managed the hotel.

The XX Century arrives

It was her, confusedly thought to have become an “entrepreneur” and no longer a simple hostess, organized the memorable party for the New Year of the century: 1900! The rooms of the *Corona d’Ora* that night was filled with men in tuxedo, and beautiful women in boa, aigrettes and sequin dresses, as the fashion trend of the XX century. Everyone toasted to the New Year with excellent sparkling wines that *Carolina* served among the velvet, mirrors, and golden setting of her elegant belle époque place. The arrival of the XX century also brought innovations to the spaces of the hotel: the team of workers generated improvements, and above all, the arrival of something completely new, the bathrooms. *Carolina* installed two per floor. Then she restored the glass windows, and putting herself to advertise her business: in 1902 showing up in front with embossed letters, written, “*Albergo della Corona d’Oro*”. She had some doubt: how to paint these letters before attaching them on the façade without damaging the bon ton of the hotel? She decided, better, without colors. She left them in concrete color. The choice showed a lot of prudent because the businesses made an important jump immediately. Conscious – as a proverb goes – “the master’s eye fattens the horse”, miss *Golfieri* monitored and, at times, her self checks the works of the staff: kept it very clean, and decorated the bedrooms and rooms, that they are like the business cards of this type of hotel. Great care was needed in the preparation of menu and of beverages for clients: the hotel’s kitchen received great reviews for both the products’ quality and freshness, and strong attention to the long and accurate cooking techniques.

Let me tell you: if Bologna maintained and consolidated the fame of its gastronomy in the early 1900s, the same certainly was true of the kitchen of *Corona d’Oro*, which increased the quality and widened its notoriety.

But my memories were not enough, there is also an irrefutable testimony, even if its indirect; that of *Gaetano Massarenti*, owner of *Caffè della Corona*, a first class place, on the other side of the street: “since the number of visitors to the overlooking hotel obtain sufficient money to feed my large family”, benefiting from the permit “of staying open all night”, it had “major earnings derived from influx from the hotel”. For the cold first courses, *Carolina* had another genius idea: for appetizers, she began serving anchovies, caviar (on the other hand, very expensive!), cappers, and marinated fish. Late at night, she went to *Via San Mamolo 52* to *Giuseppina Milani* well known as the “wholesaler” for these types of food. *Carolina* waited for the unload of packages, boxes, crates, and carefully chose between herrings, salted ells, dried and soft codfish, salaccas, tuna in oil, and salmon. All luxurious stuff: wholesale prices varied from 1 lira for codfish, 3.75 for anchovies, and 14 liras a kilogram for caviar!

But miss *Golfieri* was a good and honest woman; she did not raise the price by much! Careful and willing, she brought *Corona d’Oro* to a level of great business, elegant, knowledgeable, with a pinch of sophistication and brilliance, which clients really appreciated. For example, the light in the rooms, staircases, corridors, bedrooms from chandelier with cupolas and opaline glass buds, from the clear yellow, warm and intimate, maintained by carbon electricity that she purchased monthly from a friend, *Amedeo Sani*, owner of a store selling articles for electricity and accessories down the street on *Via Cavaliere*. Also the heater in the winter, miss *Golfieri* was not thrifty, and the people at *Società Veneta* on *Via Rizzoli* knew too well because they supplied her with Venetian carbon and English fossil fuel. Unfortunately, a neglected pleurisy forced the tireless and

passionate *Carolina* to a small sanatorium room alone and sad. She missed above all her clients, the satisfaction of the fame for her dishes of typical Bolognese cuisine, the pleasure of receiving postcards from faraway, the proof of her client's memories. She truly approached her work as a mission. Instead she had to abandon "her" hotel and sold it, in September 1918, to *Società Esercizio Alberghi di "E. Muratori e C."*, a simple limited partnership company directed by *Napoleone Ernesto Testoni*. The Great War had just finished. The returnees needed to restart life normally, and forgetting the memories of the endless months of battles, re-tasting the favors of life and art that has always been practiced in Bologna.

So people went to *Corona d'Oro* to celebrate the veterans returning home, to bring back joy, even if it is the most modest and casual, peace, to restart a worldly life.

From arzdoura to the chef

The time of the *arzdoura* (the woman of the house) cuisine, however, was diluted by the arrival of big chefs and the peak restaurants on *Via Cavaliere*, having just changed property, there must be a "leader" between the stoves! Now, the head cook was *Donato Tommasini*: a professional and artist of fine dining, among the most famous of the city, an enthusiast and active member of the "*Società di mutuo soccorso collegamento e progresso fra i cuochi di Bologna*" (Society of mutual aid, connection, and progress of cooks in Bologna). He believed in an experienced and creative work, a talent that earned him more than just recognition, but also at the national level. Since it was between the active members to celebrate the 25 years of the Society, participating in a competition to create a dish or a dessert, the award of a bronze medal was given proudly to the owner of *Hotel Corona d'Oro*, the *Società Esercizi Alberghieri* (Society of Hotel Businesses). What did our *Tommasini* make to win the award? He presented an oval plate with a cascade of *tortellini* slowly descending from a tureen supported by invisible strings into a lake full of broth with the edges composed of beef and boiled capon garnished with colorful sauces, pickled and marinated vegetables. This magnificent piece was described as "more than a plate of food, seems to visitors as a 'succulent' tribute to the celebrated Bolognese cuisine".

From my beautiful wood portico, which has survived and won the assaults of times and men, observed all these changes of uses and costumes. So much as the names changed: the ancient *Via Cavaliere* became *Via Guglielmo Oberdan*, applying the new nametag in the corner of the wall as the city Administration decided on 31st May, 1919 to honor the irredentist from Trieste who was hung by the Austrians as a defector and accused of the assassination attempt of Emperor *Francesco Giuseppe*. The recent history came to "pass" even our most ancient streets of a Bologna always changes quickly. Do you know that *Corona d'Oro* also had another denomination? Yes, sir, *Pensione Felsina*, and a bit of shine was lost at some point. To make it glisten again, in 1929, a resourceful Romagnola was in charge, *Gioconda Raspi*, a widow of *Paulucci*. She came from the Apennines, and one could tell right the way that despite of good intentions, she knew nothing about the profession. The clients knew it too. She did not produce a lump sum. Far from it. She called her cousin in Bologna, a typical *burdèla* (mess) with a "big" appearance and a romagnolo spirit. *Gioconda* put herself at the reception in charge of public relations with the clientele, and surrounded herself with people who knew what they were doing, and then put together a project with time became popular with the name of "a learning trip"... She left on a long international trip, visiting France, England, Spain, and Switzerland to study and familiarize

herself with the secrets of modern hotel organizations. When *Gioconda* returned, she transformed life into a sort of familial society with her cousin, *Zoraide*, who worked outside as a manager of the *pensione* with other relatives. It was like injecting steam to a motor; the *Pensione Felsina* claimed up the rank (and denomination) to become *Hotel Pensione Felsina*, with the word “hotel” that awarded something Parisian and sophisticated to the place, a lot more in a time when Gallicism and other foreign phrases were not used widely in Italy. It was the year 33 and full of facism; *Giovanni Rubini Mazzoni* died the year before leaving me as inheritance to his wife *Virginia Pasqua Massara* and daughter *Angiolina*. The hotel on *Via Oberdan* found itself with all classes of clientele; white spheres spread their lights at the hotel entrance, white embroidered curtains protected the privacy of guests inside the restaurant’s big glass windows that faced the street; white lace doilies, under the vase full of flowers in the hall, conferring a festive atmosphere to the ambience along with genuine hospitality.

On top of the coffee and liquor counter, the word “BAR” took full attention. With the building of *Via Oberdan*, as I have said, since a long time has been a unique, designated – as we were – both “hotel with *trattoria*”; the spaces on the ground floor were organized as one big dining room, abundant decorations in plasters and painted panels with wallpaper; in the walls near the portico, there were four rectangular doors, which opens during the summer for outdoor dining under the portico. And inside: tapestries, trophies, and sofas. A luxury that *Gioconda Raspi Paulucci* did not want to abandon, even in 1940 selling the hotel to a Swiss, *Edoardo Steiner* who had already managed hotel-restaurant “*Tre Vecchi*” and “*Locanda del Sole*” on *Via delle Pescherie Vecchie*. Steiner also controlled a profitable network of racing horse stables, which he then quit to focus on the importations of nylon socks from America. Meanwhile, he also beautified the building; in 1941, a new pavement under the portico on *Via Albari* without paying attention to budget by using clinker bricks and the intercolumniation entrances were redone with precious stones from Monghidoro. However, faith was absolutely not with Steiner; business went down hills and creditors were after him. But – the worst – was racial prosecutions. He had to hide and vanish in nothing.

Darkness of the War

It did not get better, in those tragic days, at our *Hotel Pensione Felsina*. I remember really well when the city was hit seriously, on *Via Oberdan*, and I too got damaged pretty badly. It was a blue day in the end of September – the 25th to be exact – of 1943 full of crucial events for the country; the fall of fascism and armistice. There was fear for the bombs that they had prepared to drop in Bologna; my really old walls were already shaking. That day, the *Felsina* was already damaged by aerial incursions, which the building was declared “inhabitable” and the hotel was closed.

As if it was not enough, the poor *Gioconda* – still managing the place – declared, sorrowfully, to the fascist military that the German Commander took advantage of the tragic, devastated the situation and transported all the hotel’s furniture somewhere (but where?). To me, the worst injuries was the bombing on the 29th of January, 1944; it seemed like they would demolish me because the damages on the walls of the first floor were getting worse and worse, so much so that it could not guarantee my stability. Because of this, “considering the conditions of the oak columns, which supported a big overhand and I was very worn out”, a request submitted to the Civil Engineering Department for a permit

“to built four temporary wall pillars under the architraves supported by the wooden frames”. And so it was done, using the resources for war damages. At *Felsina*, from that moment, it fell like a curtain. Those were the dark years of fear, mysteries, damages, and mourning for everyone. Who would ever have the idea of taking a risk in a big business like opening a hotel semi destroyed and ravaged by war events?

But after the war, there was somebody willing to do it.

Truly, I did not know the exact moment in which they started working to stabilize and restore me and the buildings nearby. I have been through a lot, but my memories in those days were a little blurry. I had a lot of work to fix my troubles.

Cars and trucks seemed to have it with me, which I was already “emptied by the way”! There were a lot of vehicles coming onto *Via Oberdan* and bumping into my wooden columns, even taking away the iron bollard at the corner. “Such inconvenience – pointed out by engineer *Romeo Silvi* at the end of 1949 – restored a month ago, causing justified anxiety to guests staying in *Hotel Corona d’Oro*, in rooms above the aforementioned portico waggled by construction”.

Meanwhile, the *Corona d’Oro* promptly restarted its activities; seeing taxis leaving clients; rehearing their voices when they entered the hotel at night; they came back to linger on the beautiful smell of our cuisine. The aftermath of the war was still evident for a while; the hotel was “withdrawn” from *Via Oberdan* and using – from me – only the top floor. The rest of the building was – included the beautiful room on the ground floor – was rented out to a hardware company. What was elegant, the welcoming dining room where animated and sophisticated protagonists of high cultures like Augusto Majani, Alfredo Testoni, Ostilio Lucarini, Luigi Romagnoli, and Carlo Casali gathered, became a warehouse. What a destiny for an official and substantial national monument like I am!

Fortunately, I have always had friends and appraisers, what does it mean. This group of people sent an “open letter” to the city newspaper “*L’Avvenire d’Italia*” upholding my sad conditions and, as time passed, support and requests became reality.

A “Corona” for the new millennium

The luxuries of a time (like telephone) slowly became normal necessity for every single room. *Giaconda Raspi Paulucci*, who “guided” the “resurrection” of the hotel, adapting it to the times and needs of clients, yet without a successor. And in 1969, the “*Società Liberty*” owned by two foreigners succeeded; *Giovanni Tellarini* (incredibly a Polish national, in spite of a very Italian first and last name) and an Australian, Joseph Doyle. I believe that my old friend *Agostino Torati*, the savvy *Bonaventura*, and *Giaconda* would have been a little disturbed from their eternal sleeps by such “internationalization” of the property of “their” authentic business, profoundly patronage by conquering, for centuries, the fame of exemplar hotel for Bolognese receptiveness and hospitality.

A sentiment, anyhow, has accumulated those who had made the *Corona d’Oro* live and prosper: the love for the beauty, for my past, for the testimony of arts and customs that I, for centuries, have represented.

This last decade of my life was an excitement of “discovery”, of restoring my splendors; above all, that what is called “the small room”, the beautiful space on the ground floor towards *Via S. Nicolo*. It is here, under a plaster of recent era, the authentic panelled ceiling of my birth in the years 1300 was found and brought to lights. It was in an awful condition,

obviously, with broken woods and supported by mass of beams – who knows when – to prevent a dangerous collapse.

A restorative care occurred. Now, a team of experts – with resume featuring restorations of *Palazzo Ghisilardi Fava* and *Teatro Comunale* – was put together. They went right to work: every beam in the small room was strengthened with modern metal structure, which however did not diminish the absolute esthetic of the complex; every piece of wood in the ceiling was lovingly “cared for”, and when it was time to furnish the space, only tapestries and paintings were needed because the fourteenth century ceiling was the protagonist and attracted all the attention and admirations that it merited. The room, today, is designated for conferences and conventions but also for the quiet gentlemen and ladies with a soft atmosphere in its characters.

Look here and look there, a national monument like myself preserve plenty of surprises; one of the most fascinated rooms that – as I mentioned above – until the XX century was used by the restaurant. Here, it confirms that a long time ago (when the rich and noble Bolognese families, besides competing for power, pleased themselves and their friends with artistic and cultural pleasures) the beautiful space played the role as “the music room”, in which the families came together to listen to artists playing for the joy of a very small audience. In very devastated conditions, the disfiguring from old brushes with white paint were gone; in fact, the fresco of many centuries ago abandoned the walls as well as the musical themes that once made appropriate “scenes” for notes and voices.

So, century after century, I lived and surrounded by various humanities, I have arrived here, on the eve of the 2000. I pride myself of my old age also because I could ascertain that it awards me the prestige and pleasure, to the people, to return to the origins; arriving, after a long journey, to my origins, looking around and think - for example – of the noble and noteworthy Bolognesi that met here during the Medieval Ages, the *Bentivoglio* era, when Bologna was a free city state...

I know that guests adore standing at my windows and watching the harvest, but very close, the urban glimpses that still carry the imprints of the turreted and walled city, the celebrated return to history and to writers of different countries. Proving to many that I am fascinating, welcoming their arrivals, and permeated by a refine and unforgettable look. I am happy that the various and multifold sequences of my multi-century life brought me to become what I am today: a Bolognese home, even temporarily, but always very welcoming and comfortable to all men of the world.

Hotel Corona d’Oro would like to profoundly express its gratitude for the hard work of the following people:

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On the cover:

Pointed arch gothic window of Azzuguidi antique house next to the hotel that faces Via Oberdan, characterizes the circular sign under the window.

Captions for images:

1. Torre degli Uguzzoni.
2. Bologna, Azzuguidi house (from S. Nicolo) XIV century.
3. Tile depicting canonical school scene. Giovanni Legnano.
4. The beautiful Madonna from Marchigiana school, second half of the fourteenth century, sits enthroned on the altar of the giuspatronato Azzuguidi family.
5. S. Nicolo degli Albari. High relief on the external façade (work of MAZZA).
6. Below: a foundation deed for a simple aid made by Bleobarisio Azzuguidi, of which an earning of 42 liras remained which was use for the celebrations of Ss. Messe. Frontispiece of an original document preserved in the Parochial Archive.
7. Hotel Corona d'Oro: the beautiful staircase that unites the two floors of the building.
8. On top: recess of Madonna e Bambino, original work of the XV century.
9. Vicolo S. Giobbe viewed from via dei Guidei
10. MITELLI engravings: a man carrying a barrel of wine, Vendor of Ciambelle (biscuit), Vendor of Chairs
11. Giuseppe Maria Crespi: "Dice Players"
12. Section from an old photo. It is interesting to see the positions of the hotels: on the left, at the entrance of Via Cavaliera, the sign of Locanda della Corona d'Oro is shown; to the right, hotels della Bella Venezia and dei Quarttro Pellegrini.
13. Kitchen battalion (copper): made by copper-worker Enrico Rizzi around 1870, the minute chicken is the only model. 340 pieces, every piece is perfect to the smallest details. The toaster, made of an ingenious machine, is able to turn the skewers through a specific crank. One has to be able to reproduce the organization of a kitchen in the building with abundant objects: it could be a kitchen in Montpensier, famous at its time for the quantity of copper products and tools.

14. Piazza del Nettuno after the snow of 1887.
15. A request for a permit to install a sign of the hotel.
16. 1st of May, 1860 King Vittorio Emanuele II in Bologna. The Asinelli Tower flied the tricolor flag of the Savoy. Filled with white and red roses with green leaves (the three colors of the flag) decorating Mercato di Mezzo (now Via Rizzoli).
17. Letter and assigned paper of "Corona d'Oro" by the owner Carolino Golfieri. Year 1911.
18. Inside Hotel Corona d'Oro at the beginning of the century.
19. Façade of Hotel Corona d'Oro at the beginning of the century.
20. Previous page: dining room on the first floor.
21. American tanks in Piazza Maggiore, 21st of April, 1945.
22. Breakfast from the hotel terrace with a few of Asinelli Tower.
23. Internal of the hotel looking with a window with a view of Altabella Tower, then Azzoguidi.