



THE BOURBON DI SORBELLO FAMILY

Sorbello is set on a rise in the Niccone river valley. It was originally an outlying stronghold of the fief of the Marquises of Monte Santa Maria (now Monte Santa Maria Tiberina). In turn, the marquisate was once part of the larger and more important Marquisate of Tuscany, from which it broke off during the 11th century.



In the centuries that followed, the Marquises del Monte gradually expanded their domination of the Tiber valley. The Marquises of Sorbello, a branch of the Del Monte family, broke away from the main part of the dynasty in the early part of the century. In the 16th century the Marquises del Monte added the name Bourbon to their ancient predicate in memory of remote French relations, becoming the Bourbon del Monte. The family then altered its crest, replacing the Swabian lion with the French fleur-de-lys to attest to descent from the French kings, also adding the bend sinister.

Lodovico I was the first Bourbon del Monte to be conferred the title of Marquis of Sorbello. The Holy Roman Emperor invested only one family member in each generation with the title of Marquis Regent of Sorbello. The Marquises Bourbon del Monte di Sorbello held a fief with the right of coinage. The fief was also a field of honor for duels (one of three in all of Europe). In 1815, the year of the Congress of Vienna, the marquisate was united with the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

One of the most important figures in the family was Giuseppe I (1690-1747), who established one of the family homes in Perugia. A diplomat, he was given appointments by the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont. He can be credited with expanding the marquisate following investiture of the Commendam of Knight of Saints Mauritius and Lazarus. One of his sons, Ugucione III (1737-1816), took over the family title and regency of the fief. He lived in Perugia, where he purchased a building in Piazza del Giglio, now Piazza Piccinino. With enormous dedication and constancy, he oversaw and expanded the family library and archives.

Palazzo Bourbon di Sorbello was built in Perugia during the first part of the 17th century. The Degli Oddi family took over the building in about 1639. In 1734 its subsequent owners, the Eugeni family, hosted Don Carlos of Bourbon (1716-1788), Infante of Spain and King of Naples, who was later crowned King Carlos III of Spain, during his journey to Naples. In 1785 the Palazzo was purchased by the Marquises Bourbon di Sorbello. Ugucione III had the building restored and decorated, bringing in beautiful artwork and valuable books.

Diomede (1743-1811), the brother of Ugucione II and a friend of Vittorio Alfieri, whom he met at the Royal Academy of Turin, married Vittoria Pitti Gaddi and moved to Florence, though he maintained deep friendships with important Perugia scholars. His brilliant military career did not keep him from studying literature, art and music.

The last family descendent, Altavilla, married Count Giovanni Antonio Ranieri in 1859. The Ranieri were a feudal family with historic ties to the city of Perugia. Their son Ruggero (1863-1946), who inherited the title of Marquis of Sorbello, was one of the first young noblemen of Umbria to graduate from the lay university of the new Italian state. A cavalry officer, he was part of the municipal government of Perugia and later became part of the provincial administration of Umbria, serving as councilman for public works for a number of years. In 1902 he married Romeyne Robert (1878-1951).