

The Carpi *Orto Agrario* in Mantua: From Private Garden to Experimental Agricultural Nursery to Urbanised Area

Laura Giacomini

DASTU, Polytechnic of Milan, Italy

Abstract: The study investigates the most modern phases (18th-20th centuries) of the history of an urban green space of about three hectares located in the south of Mantua just inside Porta Pusterla: the Lanzoni garden, which later became the *Orto Agrario Carpi*. The focus is on its transformation from a private “pleasure garden and vegetable garden” — a combination of the pleasurable and useful, with a small Italian garden and three large formal gardens with fruit trees, vines and vegetables — into a space of public utility annexed to an educational institute: the experimental agricultural estate of the *Scuola Agraria Carpi* and *Istituto Tecnico Pitentino*, founded in 1867-1868. It was a market garden where it was intended to test crops to be planted “in the province to improve horticulture and be useful to the country”. In the 1870s and 1880s it was equipped with all the necessary infrastructure to make it a veritable “small agricultural estate”, while also experimenting with breeding poultry and cattle. This cultivated green area that showed good resilience to changes until the 1920s, when it began to be urbanized, a process that ended in about the years 1960-1970. In spite of this, as late as 1952 a land lot of some 2,000 square meters was rented to a market gardener and cultivated.

Key words: history, Mantua, urban private garden, urban experimental agricultural nursery, 20th century urbanization

1. Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the origin and development of the *Orto Carpi* in Mantua, a large plot of land covering some 3 hectares, set in the south of the city, just inside the Porta Pusterla, a short distance from the Isola Te beyond the city walls and the Fossa Magistrale. When the Mantovano fell under Austrian rule, the land around Palazzo Te, which had been given in use to the “*Colonia Agraria*” of the Regia Accademia, was partly used for *experiments in agriculture* from the 1770s on [1-3].¹ The whole southern area of Mantua had become urban in the 15th century, but in the 18th century, as well as at the time when it was annexed to the city, it still had extensive plots laid out as vegetable gardens and orchards attached to convents and private buildings (Fig. 1).

This was the case of the city block comprising the *Orto Carpi*, which remained largely under cultivation until the 1920s. Here the vegetation, enclosed for much of its perimeter only by the boundary wall, formed part of the landscape, in contrast to what happened in the most densely built-up part of the city, where private gardens with orchards and/or vineyards, placed in the interior of the city blocks, remained hidden behind screens of buildings [4].

The plot of land in question, a private pleasure garden with a vegetable patch, was annexed to the sumptuous Palazzo Lanzoni, which Felice Carpi — banker, silk merchant and owner of agricultural estates — bought in 1829. In his will in 1851 he bequeathed it to the city of Mantua with the income from the building and adjoining vegetable garden to pay a salary to “a professor of agriculture, to give free lessons to all the inhabitants of the city and province of Mantua who wish to attend, and direct the practical work to be conducted in all that part of the garden

Corresponding author: Laura Giacomini, Ph.D., Dot. Arch.; research areas/interests: history of architecture and urban studies. E-mail: laura.giacomini@polimi.it.

¹ The activity of the “*Colonia Agraria*” ended around 1812.



Fig. 1 *Pianta della Regia città di Mantova* (Plan of the Royal City of Mantua), 1831, G. Raineri (Mantua, Biblioteca Teresiana, Stampe, ALC017): highlighted the city block where the Carpi Garden was located.

which is necessary to the purpose”.² So the whole area became public, and in 1868, as we shall see, was annexed to the Istituto Tecnico Pitentino housed in the former Palazzo Lanzoni. Felice Carpi was acclaimed as an innovator for having stressed the necessity for agrarian education in a period when very few held that opinion, being “persuaded as most people were, that in cultivating and tending crops, art could do without

science, or (as they said) practice without grammar” [5].

2. Use as a Private Garden with a Vegetable Garden: From the Lanzoni Garden to the Orto Carpi (1728-1854)

The vegetable garden attached to the Carpi Agricultural School coincided in form and extension with the former garden of Palazzo Lanzoni, except for a modest area that Carpi had sold to the Austrian military treasury in 1852, on which it had built the Sant'Alessio gunpowder magazine [6]. Between 1728 and 1799 the Marquises Lanzoni had united numerous

² Archivio Storico Civico Mantova (ASCMn), *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 24, Carpi testament 13.7.1851 and ratification of the donation 21.10.1858; with this deed Carpi's widow Rosa Susani confirmed her renunciation “in favour of this municipality of her right to a lifetime interest in the Palazzo known as Lanzoni and the Vegetable Garden annexed to it”.

plots with buildings and land that occupied the whole central part of the great city block lying between what are now Via Acerbi, Via Fratelli Grioli, Via Conciliazione and Viale Risorgimento, the avenue laid out on the course of the demolished Gonzaga walls (Fig. 2). The interior areas and those facing Via della Conciliazione had belonged to the Camaldolese monastery of San Marco, suppressed on 8 January 1772 [7]. This land, described in 1476 as *meadows*, *vegetable gardens* and *orchards*, was still mainly laid out as vegetable gardens when they were acquired by the Lanzoni family. In addition to the convent, which they demolished, and the ruins of the church, destroyed during the sieges of the Napoleonic wars, the Lanzoni family acquired the large garden attached to it (covering some 13,650 square meters) and a small vegetable garden (of about 3,626 square meters).³ The area along Via Acerbi, a patch of land with “garden, tillage and buildings” with the plot of the former house of Mantegna and a land lot at the time owned by the Chamber and used as “a vegetable patch, with pergolas of vines, various fruits, and mulberries”, had instead been part of the Gonzaga estate as part of the 16th-century *Palazzo di San Sebastiano* [8].⁴ Here, uniting the two buildings, there had been a *large* and *beautiful* Italian garden with mazes of vegetation, a fountain, pergolas and potted citrus plants, which must have been flanked by areas of orchard, as suggested by Bertazzolo’s map of 1628, or perhaps by more vegetable plots. It was a space combining utility and pleasure, as was customary in the Gonzagas’ gardens. Their fruits delighted the fine palate of the court, were a source of pride for the Gonzagas and astonishment and interest to their guests, as well as providing gifts for eminent personages [9] (Fig. 3).

³ Lanzoni purchased four lots of the monastery’s property; see: Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMn), *Notarile*, b. 7103, purchase 6.6.1772; ASCMn, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26, purchases 21.3.1777, 5.12.1799 and 23.12.1799.

⁴ See: ASCMn, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26, purchases, 31.3.1728 and 7.6.1775.

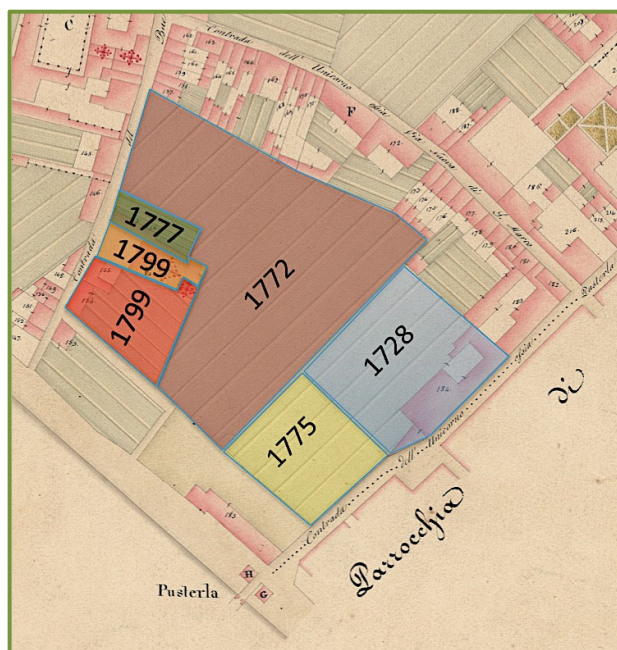


Fig. 2 Mantova Parrocchia di S. Barnaba (Mantua Parish of San Barnaba), 1777-1824, G. Gallarati-G. Tarantola (Mantua, Archivio di Stato, *Catasto Teresiano*, Mappe, Mantova, cart. 1, f. 2): detail of the city block where the Lanzoni garden stood; highlighted the six lots purchased by Lanzoni between 1728 and 1799.

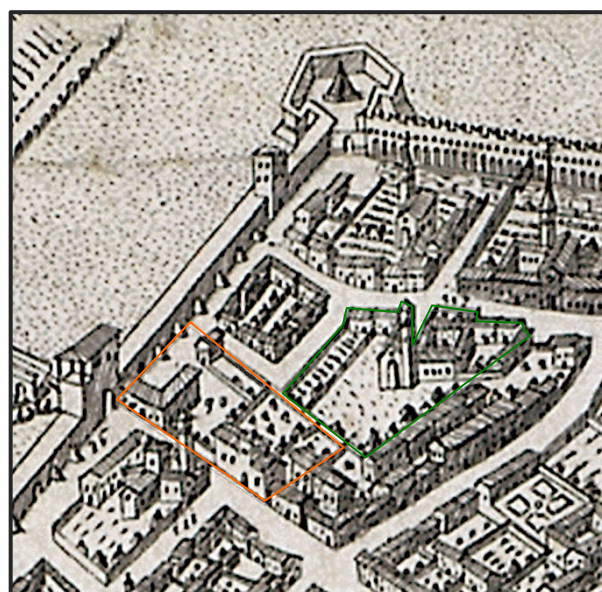


Fig. 3 *Urbis Mantuæ Descriptio* (Description of the City of Mantua), 1628, G. Bertazzolo (Mantua, Biblioteca Teresiana, *Stampe*, rotolo 1): detail of the block where the Lanzoni garden would be laid out; in green the monastery of San Marco with its adjoining vegetable plots, in orange the Palazzo di San Sebastiano and the House of Mantegna with the Gonzaga garden between them.

In this way the Lanzoni came into the possession of a property of more than 3 hectares, where they built a splendid garden, including a formal vegetable garden and orchard, echoing the Gonzaga's *giardini di delizie*, lending prestige to the palazzo, which in the meantime had been built by incorporating and extending the House of Mantegna. A site plan of the Lanzoni *Palace and Garden*, dating from the period between 1777 and 1799 (Fig. 4), and the Theresian Cadastral map, dated 1824 but resting on surveys made in 1778, together with some documents, enable us to understand the features of that garden.

The drawing shows it was divided into large rectangular parterres by primary and secondary avenues, the largest of which, laid out on the axis of the hall giving access to the complex, ended towards Via della Conciliazione in an exedra framing a gate. At the back of the palazzo can be seen a berceau of greenery, followed, just behind the former House of

Mantegna, by a small Italian garden. The large surrounding parterres are shown as regular strips dotted with small trees, which refer to their use as a vegetable garden and orchard, and are surrounded by narrow strips that may represent pergolas of vines wedded to trees.⁵ We find confirmation of a prevalent use of the land as a vegetable garden in the deed of sale of the property to Felice Carpi. Together with the building, it mentions a “vegetable garden, greenhouse, prospect, house for the gardeners with adjoining outhouse and suchlike in the middle of the garden with wells, (...) wooden columns in the pergolas, (...) potherbs, and all the other appurtenances of the same vegetable gardens”. There were three vegetable gardens, called “San Marco, the middle garden, and the garden of Palazzo Lanzoni”, which were leased out.⁶

The new owner did not alter the garden, of which he wrote, “it is wholly surrounded by a wall and abounds in wells, fruit, and pergolas”.⁷ and he continued to rent out the part laid out as a vegetable garden, used to cultivate, in addition to *fruit trees* and *vines*, also *asparagus* and *strawberry plants*. As can be deduced from the leases, the market gardener was required to “cultivate the vegetable garden as an expert agriculturist in keeping with the esteemed manner of the country, with the obligation to look after the plants and vines” as well as keeping the *avenues* clear, keeping the *hedges* and *pergolas* in their present state, and keeping the footpaths and the *Caffe Haus* clean.⁸ The property as a whole (Fig. 5), as Carpi himself noted, guaranteed *rent*, *comfort* and *pleasures*.⁹ Consequently it can be surmised that the products grown on it, intended partly for consumption by the families of the owners and the tenant market

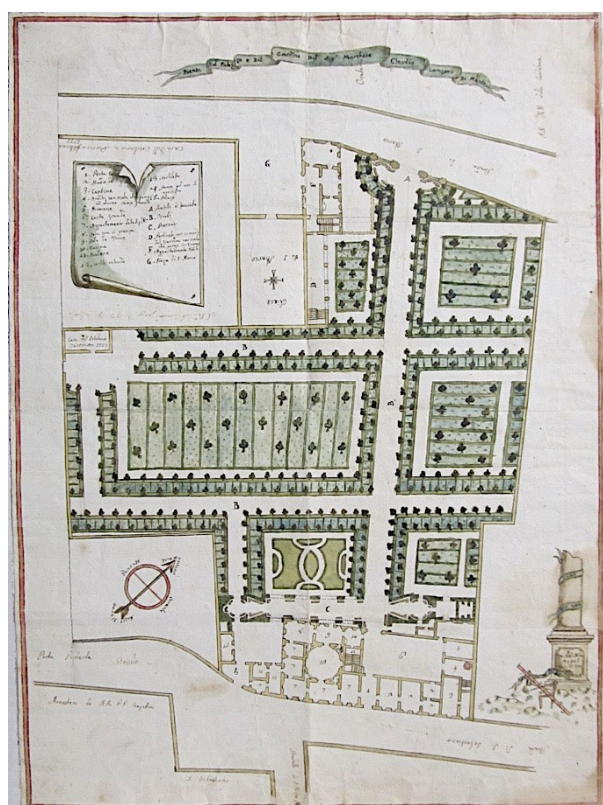


Fig. 4 Plan of the palace and garden of Signor Marchese Claudio Lanzoni in Mantua, XVIII sec. (Mantua, Archivio Storico Civico, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26 cassetiera).

⁵ The “Pianta del Palazzo e del Giardino del sig.r Marchese Claudio Lanzoni di Mantova” is kept in: ASCMn, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26, cassetiera.

⁶ ASMn, *Notarile*, b. 1810, sale 1.4.1829, n. 7101.

⁷ ASCMn, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26, description of the Carpi estate 1832-1834.

⁸ ASMn, *Notarile*, b. 2124, Bertagna rent 4.7.1844, n. 1332; ASCMn, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26, Marchini rent 30.7.1844.

⁹ ASCMn, *Atti di cauta custodia*, b. 26, description of the Carpi estate 1832-1834.

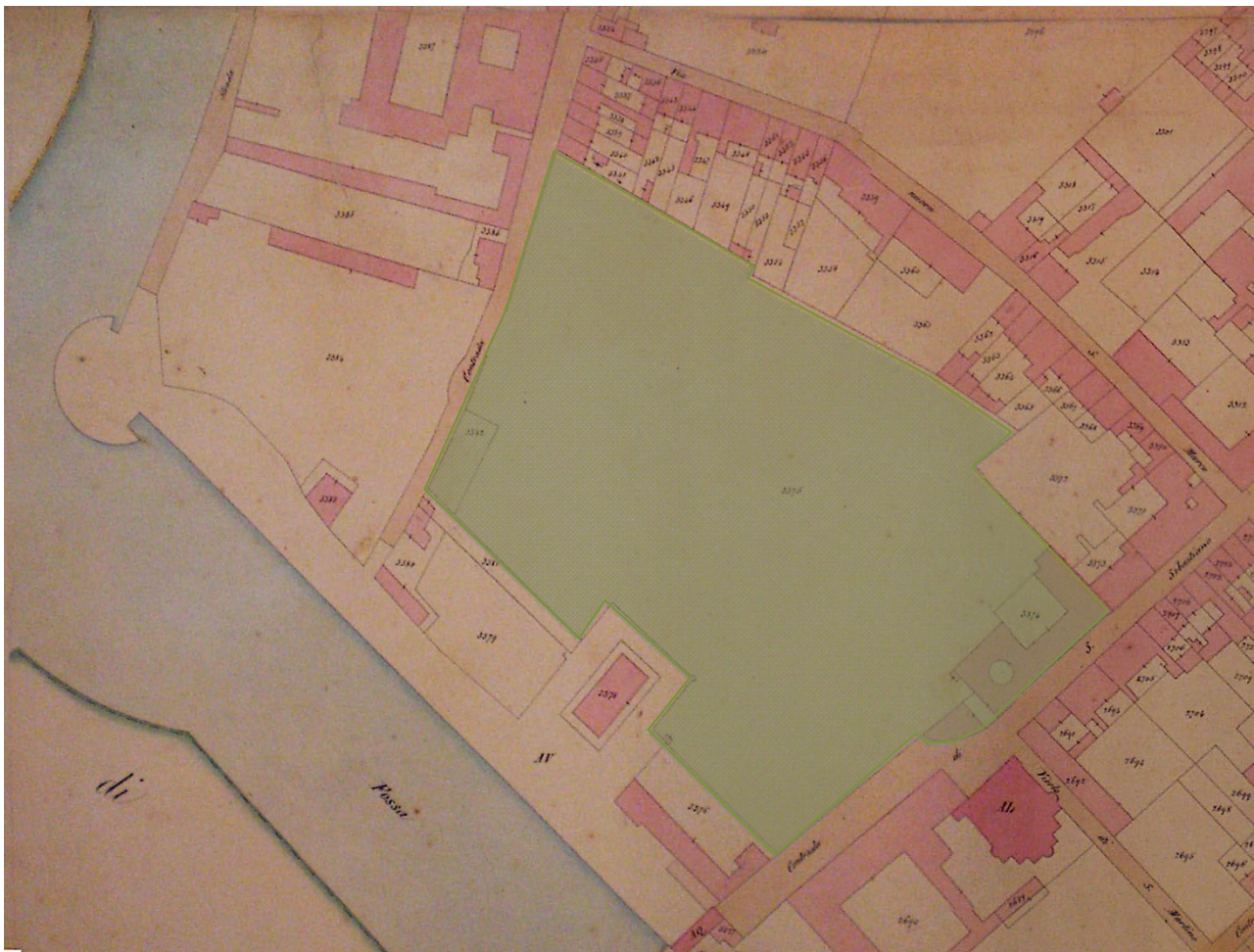


Fig. 5 Map of Mantua in the Lombardy-Veneto cadastre, 1855 (Mantua, Archivio di Stato, *Catasto Lombardo-Veneto*, Mappe, Mantova, cart. 4, f. 9): detail, in green the Carpi agricultural estate.

gardeners, were also sold in the city, ensuring an income that added to that from rents.

3. Use as the Experimental Agricultural Estate of the *Istituto Tecnico Pitentino* and *Scuola Agraria Carpi* (1867-1926)

The bequest of the Carpi property to the City of Mantua (1851-1854) occurred at a time when a debate was growing up in Mantua on the need for the establishment of an *agricultural school*, which, as *La Lucciola* commented, “is felt as a real need, and especially where (as among us), while Agriculture is the most important and most appropriate source of production, the industry associated with it still offers

scope for many improvements” [10].¹⁰ Despite this, the situation became favorable only after the annexation of Mantua to the Kingdom of Italy. The Scuola Agraria Carpi was opened in 1867, and by the following year had been incorporated into the Agronomy and Land Surveying section of the new

¹⁰ This debate was initiated by the Chamber of Commerce of Mantua in 1851, which delegated a commission to analyze the issue. The commission presented two projects. The first, desirable but difficult to implement, provided for the opening of a Central Institute in Mantua, for theoretical teaching with the possibility of carrying out small experiments in an adjoining model farm, and four purely practical schools of agriculture, endowed with a large estate, located one in each of the four agricultural districts of the province of Mantua. The second, more modest but feasible, envisaged the opening of the only school in Mantua to teach both theory and practice, annexing to it a small plot of farmland of sufficient extension, and it was proposed to use Palazzo Lanzoni with the adjoining land for this purpose [10-14].

Istituto Tecnico Pitentino, which retained the double title for over 30 years. At first only a third of the land adjacent to the premises of the Institute was used as the school's experimental agricultural estate, where it was intended to test crops (fruit trees such as apples, pears, peaches and grapevines, vegetables, cereals, fodder, industrial crops, dye plants, coppice plants, oil-bearing plants, etc.) to then be spread "through the province to improve horticulture and be useful to the country".¹¹ The remaining two-thirds continued to be leased to produce rent. The lessons in agronomy were accompanied "by the inspection of the various crops that are grown in the experimental field annexed to the Institute" [15], while lessons in Natural History were completed by practical education at the neighboring Botanical Garden [16-18].

Between 1877 and 1879 also the parts that until then had been left as orchard and vegetable garden were converted into a "true field of practical teaching of agriculture" [19, 20], in order to seek recognition for the Agronomy section, which had been separated from Land Surveying, and with the transformation of the Institute from a provincial to a government-run school, which required "an extensive estate" for practical exercises [21, 22]. Thus, all the trees that had covered "the area earmarked for field crops" were cut down and replaced by "new cultivations" set "in the most suitable places".¹² Although the Agronomy section of the Institute had not been reopened, due to the small number of students enrolled in it, the work of setting up the experimental garden, now as part of the Surveying section, where lessons in agriculture were also taught, continued throughout the next decade so that it finally "corresponded to a small farm".¹³ For this purpose, in 1874-1875, a "small

farm building for storing agricultural produce and machinery" was added to the existing houses for gardener¹⁴ [23], and in 1876 "a paved threshing floor",¹⁵ while a "sericultural observatory" was set up in some outhouses. In the school year 1885-1886, plant nurseries were established "to supply farmers, who require them, with seedlings from fruits of choice species and varieties very cheaply" [24]. Finally, in 1889, "a small cowshed with a hay loft above it" was built.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the agricultural estate had been structured as follows: about one-third of the land was cultivated "as wheat", one-third "with maize" and one-third "with an artificial meadow of alfalfa", while "small strips of land around the perimeter of the garden were planted with fruit trees [plums, cherries, pears, apples, peaches, apricots, almonds, figs and grapevines], with vegetables [tomatoes, beans, peas, broad beans, beets, pumpkins, turnips, etc.], plant nurseries, reeds and various crops" [25], including the mulberry trees needed for raising silkworms. There was also a henhouse and in 1889 a cattle stud was introduced.¹⁷ In these years the garden had become a *true practical school* "not only for the students of the Institute, but also for many visitors from outside, who in agriculture wish to find not just abstract science, but profitable industry". These included "several owners of agricultural estates who visited the garden or received information from it", farmers and fruit-growers who followed the autumn courses on grafting and fruit-growing and "primary school-teachers, who attended the agricultural conferences" [25, 26].

¹⁴ See the *Progetto ridotto di un fabbricato rustico per la Scuola di Agronomia, annessa all'Istituto Tecnico Professionale*, 31.8.1874 (ASCMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 55, fasc. 1).

¹⁵ See the *Progetto per una piccola Aja selciata da costruirsi nell'Orto Agrario annesso all'Istituto Tecnico Professionale*, 5.4.1876 (ASCMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 55, fasc. 1).

¹⁶ ASCMn, *Sezione ottocentesca*, Titolo X.14.2, b. 560, letter 7.11.1889.

¹⁷ ASCMn, *Sezione ottocentesca*: Titolo X.14.1, b. 556, Vivenza report 31.1.1887 and enclosures to Vivenza report 1885-1886; Titolo X.14.2, b. 560, letter 7.11.1889.

¹¹ ASCMn, *Sezione ottocentesca*, Titolo V.5, b. 308, Barbeta letter 1866.

¹² ASCMn, *Sezione ottocentesca*, Titolo X.14.2, b. 558, letter 5.10.1878.

¹³ The expression is taken from *Progetto per l'esecuzione di tutte le opere necessarie a completare i rustici occorrenti onde l'attuale Orto Agrario annesso all'Istituto Tecnico Professionale possa corrispondere ad una piccola Azienda Agraria* (ASCMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 55, fasc. 1).

In around 1887, the prospect of enlarging the experimental Carpi agricultural estate was also given consideration by annexing the adjacent and now neglected Botanical Garden [4, 27, 28],¹⁸ and the nearby garden of Casa Gioppi (Fig. 6), in which to practice the “forced cultivation of vegetables” and set



Fig. 6 *Pianta della Regia città di Mantova* (Plan of the Royal City of Mantua), 1831, G. Raineri (Mantua, Biblioteca Teresiana, *Stampe*, ALC017): detail, in green the Carpi agricultural estate, in orange the Botanical Garden.



Fig. 7 *Tipo planimetrico dell'Orto Agrario annesso al R° Istituto Tecnico Professionale* (Layout of the Agricultural Estate annexed to the Royal Professional Technical Institute), 1884, A. Portioli (Mantua, Archivio Storico Civico, *Sezione ottocentesca*, b. 634, Titolo V. 5): you can see the outbuilding and the threshing floor constructed near the school (1874 and 1876).

¹⁸ The Botanical Garden of Mantua faced Via della Conciliazione towards the Orto Agrario Carpi. Planting began in 1780 and it was closed in 1882, while the land with buildings was sold to private individuals in 1888.

up an experimental winery for studying “the making and storing of wines, this rural industry of the utmost importance”. This would have created the rare resource of a little farm of nearly 5 hectares placed in the town and highly useful, since: “Schools in the countryside are almost always too rustic, costly, poorly attended and rarely staffed with talented teachers”.¹⁹ In reality, this desired enlargement failed to materialize and the dimensions of the Orto Agrario Carpi, as found in a survey of 1884,²⁰ as well as its educational-experimental function, remained unchanged until the 1920s [29, 30] (Fig. 7).²¹

4. Urbanization of the Site of the Former Orto Carpi and the Progressive Disappearance of Its Productive Function

In the 1920s, with the resumption of economic activities and buildings after the post-war stasis, consideration began to be given to expanding the city. This first took place in the south thanks to the demolition of the city walls, reclamation of the areas in Paiolo and elimination of part of the military easement. In this way some areas of the city that were still unbuilt were urbanized and therefore its south-west expansion was planned in the area bounded by the railway line [31].

The projects completed included the “rearrangement of the Orto Carpi with the laying out of new streets and building of the Viale delle Rimembranze”, launched in 1923-1924. The 14,000 square meters of the agricultural garden to the south were turned partly into roads and partly into building land. Here numerous “little villas” were built and two main streets: the tree-lined Viale delle Rimembranze,

¹⁹ For the three previous quotations, see: ASCMn, *Sezione ottocentesca*, Titolo X.14.1, b. 556, Vivenza report 31.1.1887.

²⁰ ASCMn, *Sezione ottocentesca*, Titolo V. 5, b. 634, *Tipo planimetrico dell'Orto Agrario annesso al R° Istituto Tecnico Professionale* 4.6.1884.

²¹ From the beginning of the century until 1915 the estate of the Orto Agrario Carpi was directed by the teacher of agricultural Professor Fausto Rimini [6]. See also: ASCMn, *Sezione novecentesca*, Categoria V.3.1, stabile 13, letter 1.3.1912.

placed on the same axis as the church of San Sebastiano and Viale Colonello Antonio Gioppi set perpendicular to it. Of the rest of the area of the agricultural estate, located in the city block to the north of Viale delle Rimembranze, which was then being built, some 16,000 square meters were left to the school. The rest, which had formed a buffer zone between the cultivated area and Viale delle Rimembranze, running from Via della Conciliazione to Viale Gioppi, was taken for building. This situation is recorded in the cadastral map known as the Catasto Cessato (Fig. 8).

At the same time, it was decided to demolish the farmhouse of the Carpi agricultural estate on Via della Conciliazione because “both by its structure and state of maintenance it is certainly not a model school” and to build a new *technically modern one with a cowshed* also on Via della Conciliazione [32], which it was decided to enlarge, but “in the zone that will remain as an experimental field”. These operations were carried out around 1927-1928.²² In the same years further inroads were decided: the remaining strip of land of some 1,550 square meters facing Viale delle Rimembranze between Viale Gioppi and Via Acerbi was cut off “to build three houses” (work started in 1932-1933) to the “great aesthetic advantage of the town, without damage to the Orto” since that land, being *of poor quality*, “was unsuited to farming”.²³ The Orto Carpi’s use as a teaching aid was probably ended in the years when its urbanization began. In 1927 the garden was leased for sharecropping and



Fig. 8 Map of Mantua in the *Catasto Cessato*, late 19th century, updated to 1933 (Mantua, Archivio di Stato, *Cessato Catasto*, Mappe, Ufficio imposte dirette di Mantova, n. 742, Mantova sez. A f. 9): detail, in green the area left to the Carpi Agricultural Estate.

produced maize, table grapes and fruit (plums and pears) [18].²⁴

The area was given its definitive structure following the purchase of the school building and annexed garden by the Province of Mantua in 1937.²⁵ The area of the garden was divided by the extension of Viale Gioppi: the part to the east, a field of 2,000 square meters, used for growing cauliflowers, was turned into the garden of the House of Mantegna, parceled off with the restoration of the school building. The rest of the land became the courtyard of the Istituto Tecnico Pitentino.²⁶ Of the area to the west, a large land lot facing Viale della Conciliazione was donated in 1938 to the Opera Nazionale Maternità ed Infanzia, which

²² The maps and drawings relating to the urbanization of the *Orto Agrario Carpi* and the construction of the new farmhouse are to be found in: ASCMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 72, fasc. 3; in particular quotations are taken from: *Progetto di massima di sistemazione dell'orto Carpi*, 27.12.1923.

²³ See: ASCMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 72, fasc. 3, Report concerning the setting back of a section of the boundary wall on Viale delle Rimembranze 27.4.1927; Archivio storico provinciale di Mantova (ASPMn), *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 238, purchase 14.9.1933 and the matter of the Bozzi firm's boundary 22.7.1942. One of the two houses built on this land lot was the home of the engineer Badalotti; it was then sold to Tazio Nuvolari [32].

²⁴ See: ASCMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 72, fasc. 3, *Stima dei raccolti pendenti che verranno distrutti* 25.7.1927.

²⁵ ASCMn, *Sezione novecentesca*, Categoria IX.5.3. It was sold to the province on 24.3.1937.

²⁶ ASPMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 238, fasc. 1, various papers of 1942-1947 relating to the restoration of the House of Mantegna and the layout of its garden, including the *Planimetria ex Orto Carpi da destinarsi a Giardino Casa del Mantegna e cortile R° Istituto Tecnico*.



Fig. 9 Cadastral map of Mantua illustrating the situation in the area around 1940 (Mantua, Archivio storico della Provincia, copy): detail, in green the remaining area of the former Orto Carpi.

built the “Casa della Madre e del Bambino”. The remaining 4,900 square meters, bordering Viale Gioppi, initially leased and still used at the time as a vegetable garden, were gradually taken over, from the 1950s on, for some small condominium buildings for employees of the Province of Mantua [6] (Figs. 9 and 10).²⁷ This is the situation that appears in the plans of the Variant to the 1974 General City Plan²⁸ and broadly exists today, with only some small green areas as private gardens or the grounds of public institutions.

5. Conclusion

The study has brought out the resilience of the urban lot examined, which adapted to the socio-economic and political changes that occurred in Mantua between the 15th and early 20th century, becoming a mirror of the city’s history, without ever losing its nature as a green productive space. In medieval times the plot of land in question was occupied by the gardens,

²⁷ See: ASPMn, *Ufficio tecnico*, b. 238 fasc. 2, rents from 1942 to 1952. A passage in one of these leases from 1952 reads: “Note that after the construction of the housing for employees, the area of the former Orto Carpi remaining available for cultivation is about half of that leased to Signor Bovi in the past (2,000 square meters)”.

²⁸ See the site www.rapu.it and the current land register map.

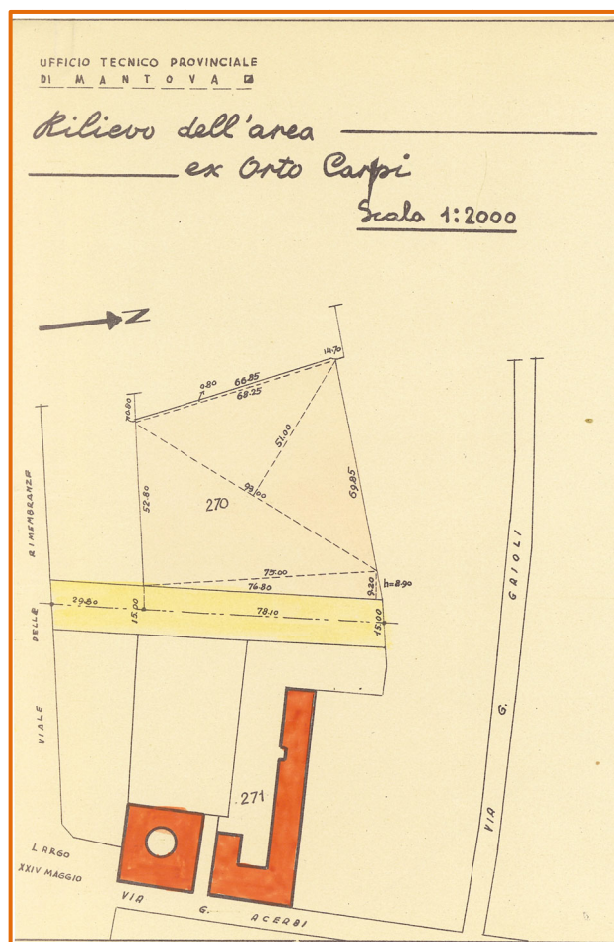


Fig. 10 *Rilievo dell'area ex Orto Carpi* (Layout of the former Orto Carpi), 1942 c. (Mantua, Archivio Storico della Provincia, *Ufficio Tecnico*, b. 238 fasc. 2): on the left the House of Mantegna with its garden, on the right the Pitentino Technical institute with its courtyard.

meadows and orchards of the monastery of San Marco. The part of it on Via Acerbi was then purchased by the Gonzaga rulers of Mantua, who in the 16th century turned it into an Italian-style *giardino di delizie* with orchards and pergolas of vines connecting the Gonzagas’ Palazzo di San Sebastiano to the former house of the court painter Andrea Mantegna. In the 18th century, with the fall of the Gonzaga, the transfer of Mantua to Austria and the subsequent monastic suppressions the plot of land was almost completely privatized, passing into the ownership of the noble Lanzoni family. They laid it out as a formal garden with berceaus in the part closest to their palace, which had incorporated the former House of Mantegna; they

also retained the vegetable plots and orchards covering most of the land, divided into three gardens which were then rented out. In the 19th century, dominated by the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, the ownership of these lands passed to the Jewish banker and merchant Felice Carpi. He did not change its use and in 1851 decided to leave it to the municipality to open an agricultural school. He was convinced of the importance of renewing agriculture, which was still in a “traditional and empirical” stage in Mantua at the time and believed in the essential role an agricultural school would play in training advanced entrepreneurs and agricultural technicians. The school, later incorporated into the Istituto tecnico Pitentino, was opened in 1867 immediately after Mantua was united to the Kingdom of Italy, since education, including technical instruction, was considered the main instrument for “making the Italians”. In this way the land annexed to it, formerly private, became public and was turned into an experimental agricultural estate with an educational function.

The productive use of this land, overwhelmed by the process of urban development of the city’s peripheral areas and its expansion southward, gradually ceased between 1920 and 1970. In 1952, of the three hectares of the former Orto Carpi there remained only a garden of about 2,000 square meters set in the innermost part of the block.

Figures references, permission to reproduce

Figures 2, 5 and 8, © Archivio di Stato di Mantova, permission n. 392/28.14.00 (1); Figures 4 and 7, © Archivio Storico Civico di Mantova, permission n. 1/2019 prot. 4101-18/01/2019; Figures 1, 3 and 6, © Biblioteca comunale Teresiana di Mantova, permission n. 1/2019 prot. 5282-23/01/2019; figures 9 and 10, © Archivio Storico della Provincia di Mantova, permission n. 2019/4302.

References

- [1] I. Comin, L’area del Te: trasformazioni e usi del giardino esterno alla villa, in: A. Mortari, C. Bonora Previdi (Eds.), Parchi e giardini pubblici. Il verde a Mantova dalla fine del Settecento al secondo dopoguerra, Comune di Mantova, Mantua, 2004, pp. 107-116.
- [2] E. Camerlenghi, La colonia Agraria dell’Accademia Reale di Scienze e Belle lettere: dalla fondazione alle perlustrazioni di Angelo Gualandris, in P. Tosetti Grandi, A. Mortari (eds.), Dall’Accademia degli Invaghiti, nel 450° anniversario dell’Istituzione, all’Accademia nazionale Virgiliana di scienze lettere e arti in Mantova, proceedings of the international congress (29-30.11.2012, Mantua), Publi Paolini, Mantua, 2016, pp. 343-362.
- [3] U. Bazzotti, 28.5 I giardini esterni, in: P. E. Falini, C. Bonora Previdi, M. Brignani (Eds.), I giardini dei Gonzaga. Un Atlante per la storia del territorio, Del Gallo Editore, Spoleto, 2018, pp. 298-305.
- [4] C. Bonora Previdi, Parchi e giardini. Il verde urbano a Mantova tra Settecento e Ottocento, in E. Camerlenghi, V. Rebonato, S. Tammaccaro (eds.), Il Paesaggio mantovano nelle tracce materiali, nelle lettere e nelle arti. IV il paesaggio mantovano dall’età delle riforme all’Unità (1700-1866), *Proceedings of the Conference (19-20.5.2005, Mantua)*, Leo S. Olshchki, Florence, 2010, pp. 261-305.
- [5] Nella inaugurazione del busto in marmo del fu signor Felice Carpi fondatore della Scuola Agraria in Mantova seguita il giorno 26 marzo 1876 nell’Istituto Tecnico Provinciale di detta Città. Parole del Preside alle Autorità invitate, ai Professori ed agli Alunni, in L’istituto Tecnico provinciale e la scuola agraria Carpi in Mantova nell’anno 1876, Tipografia B. Balbiani, Mantua, 1877, pp. 5-12.
- [6] U. Norsa, Un benemerito ebreo precursore dell’istruzione agraria a Mantova. Felice Carpi e l’Istituto Agrario Carpi, *Gazzetta di Mantova*, Thursday 22 January (1981), p. 3.
- [7] C. Togliani, Un perduto scrigno d’arte. Il monastero di San Marco in Mantova, *Quaderni di san Leonardo* 15 (2017) 77-125.
- [8] C. Bonora Previdi, L. Giacomini, 41 Il giardino di Palazzo di san Sebastiano o della Pusterla, in: P. E. Falini, C. Bonora Previdi, M. Brignani (Eds.), *I giardini dei Gonzaga. Un Atlante per la storia del territorio*, Del Gallo Editore, Spoleto 2018, pp. 335-345 (This is the most recent work on the garden of the Palazzo di San Sebastino, with updated bibliography).
- [9] P. E. Falini, C. Bonora Previdi, M. Brignani (Eds.), *I giardini dei Gonzaga. Un Atlante per la storia del territorio*, Del Gallo Editore, Spoleto 2018 (with a full bibliography on the Gonzaga gardens).
- [10] Studj preliminari per la istituzione di una scuola agraria nella provincia di Mantova, La Lucciola. *Gazzettino del Contado* 2 (23.4.1855) 9-12.

[1] I. Comin, L’area del Te: trasformazioni e usi del giardino esterno alla villa, in: A. Mortari, C. Bonora Previdi (Eds.),

- [11] Studj preliminari per la istituzione di una scuola agraria nella provincia di Mantova, La Lucciola. *Gazzettino del Contado* 3 (30.4.1855) 19-20.
- [12] Studj preliminari per la istituzione di una scuola agraria nella provincia di Mantova, La Lucciola. *Gazzettino del Contado* 4 (6.5.1855) 30-32.
- [13] Studj preliminari per la istituzione di una scuola agraria nella provincia di Mantova, La Lucciola. *Gazzettino del Contado* 8 (4.6.1855) 57-58.
- [14] L. Boldrini, La Scuola agraria, e la Commissione Agricola permanente presso la Camera di commercio, La Lucciola. *Gazzettino del Contado* 2 (22.4.1856) 5-6.
- [15] Parte Terza programmi d'insegnamento. C) Agronomia, in L'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale di Mantova. Notizie e programmi a cura del preside e dei professori. Anno scol. 1873-74 – VI dell'Istituto, Stab. Tipografico Eredi Segna, Mantua, 1874, pp. 191-198.
- [16] C. Gorini, Parte seconda. L'Istituto Tecnico di Mantova in ispecie, in L'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale di Mantova. Notizie e programmi a cura del preside e dei professori. Anno scol. 1873-74 – VI dell'Istituto, Stab. Tipografico Eredi Segna, Mantua, 1874, pp. 25-50.
- [17] E. Penasa, Origini e vita del R. Istituto Tecnico di Mantova. Triennio scolastico 1868-1871, in *Annuario Scolastico triennio 1934-1937*, Tipografia operaia, Mantua, 1937, pp. 2-37.
- [18] A. Ghinzelli, L'istituto tecnico "Pitentino" e la scuola agraria "Carpi", in *Annuario dell'Istituto Tecnico Statale "A. Pitentino"*, anno scolastico 1963-64, Mantua, 1965, pp. 1-10.
- [19] Alcune notizie concernenti l'istituto nell'anno 1878, in L'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale e la Scuola Agraria Carpi in Mantova nell'anno 1878, Premiato stabilimento tipografico Mondovi, Mantua 1879, p. 14.
- [20] Alcune notizie sull'istituto nel periodo dal gennaio 1879 al maggio 1880, in L'Istituto Tecnico di Mantova e la Scuola Agraria Carpi nell'anno 1879 e 1° quadrimestre 1880, Premiato Stabilimento Tipografico Mondovi, Mantua, 1880, pp. 36-37.
- [21] Discorso del preside dell'Istituto..., in L'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale e la Scuola Agraria Carpi in Mantova nell'anno 1877, Stab. Tip. Eredi Segna, Mantua, 1878, pp. 38-41.
- [22] Più importanti notizie concernenti lo stato e l'andamento dell'Istituto Tecnico Pitentino ed annessa Scuola Agraria Carpi in Mantova nell'anno 1876, in L'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale e la Scuola Agraria Carpi in Mantova nell'anno 1876, Tipografia B. Balbiani, Mantua, 1877, pp. 49-51.
- [23] Notizie sull'andamento dell'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale di Mantova ed annessa Scuola Agraria Carpi dal maggio 1874 al dicembre 1875, in L'Istituto Tecnico Provinciale e la Scuola Agraria Carpi in Mantova. Notizie e prospetti concernenti il periodo dal maggio 1874 al dicembre 1875, Stabilimento Tipografico Mondovi, Mantua, 1875, p. 25.
- [24] Vivai and Osservatorio sericolo, in R. Istituto Tecnico Alberto Pitentino e Scuola Agraria Carpi di Mantova. Relazione sull'andamento dell'anno scolastico 1885-1886, Stabilimento Tip.-Lit. Eredi Segna, Mantua, 1887, pp. 13-14.
- [25] Campo sperimentale, in: R. Istituto Tecnico Alberto Pitentino e Scuola Agraria Carpi di Mantova. Relazione sull'andamento dell'anno scolastico 1886-1887, Stabilimento Tip. Eredi Segna, Mantua, 1888, pp. 10-14.
- [26] Campo sperimentale and Corsi autunnali, in R. Istituto Tecnico Alberto Pitentino e Scuola Agraria Carpi di Mantova. Relazione sull'andamento dell'anno scolastico 1885-1886, Stabilimento Tip.-Lit. Eredi Segna, Mantua, 1887, pp. 13, 15-17.
- [27] S. Sicoli, Il "Giardino botanico officinale" di Mantova: l'Ottocento, in: G. Guerci, L. Pelissetti, L. Scazzosi (Eds.), *Oltre il giardino. Le architetture vegetali e il paesaggio*, Leo S. Olschki, Florence, 2003, pp. 399-409.
- [28] D. A. Franchini, Verde, sperimentazione e ricerca: l'Orto Botanico e la Scuola Agraria Carpi, in: A. Mortari, C. Bonora Previdi (Eds.), *Parchi e giardini pubblici. Il verde a Mantova dalla fine del Settecento al secondo dopoguerra*, Comune di Mantova, Mantua, 2004, pp. 39-48.
- [29] L. Cavazzoli, Ardigò e l'istruzione secondaria a Mantova, in: C. G. Lacaita & M. Fugazza (Eds.), *L'istruzione secondaria nell'Italia unita 1861-1901*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 2013, pp. 356-373.
- [30] M. Vaini, L'unificazione in una provincia agricola. Il Mantovano dal 1866 al 1886, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1998, pp. 93-98.
- [31] R. M. Rombolà, Mantova piani 1883-2004, Libreria Clup, Milan 2006.
- [32] A. Briani, Aldo Badalotti e la città. Dal risanamento e riqualificazione di Mantova allo sviluppo dell'edilizia sociale a Trieste, degree thesis, Polytechnic of Milan, supervisors L. Giacomini and C. Bonora Previdi, 2015-2016, pp. 75-79, 105-109.