

Pordenone, former Dominican Convent

The convent of the Dominican fathers was built at the end of the 18th century, outside the city walls, on a modest height surrounded by uneven terrain rich in resurgence waters and delimited by buildings for agricultural use, dwellings and the so-called "peschiera", that is an artificial pond. The Dominicans purchased from Daniele of Montereale Mantica in 1696 this land, formerly of municipal property, which at the time was rented to a colonist who cultivated a vegetable garden, an orchard and a "braida" partly held to wheat, rye and in part left to grass. The construction of the convent began in 1699 but was completed, with the adjoining church of the Rosario (but without a bell tower), only in 1728, after several interruptions and restarts, transforming the morphology of the plot into several points.

To allow the communication of the new building with the city the Dominican fathers asked and obtained permission to open a passage in the city walls and to build a bridge, later called Ponte delle Monache, over the course of the Mulini canal.

The complex was formed by the convent, a two-storey building located on three sides of a square and from the church along the entire eastern side. Within the complex there was the current cloister, a perfect square with harmonious lines with rusticated columns and round arches. On the ground floor, at the north and west wings, there was an internal corridor that allowed access to the various refectory rooms, kitchen, oven, pantry, offices and guest quarters.

The church of the Rosario was consecrated in September 1729, while in August 1735 the four bells were placed in the bell tower; the bell tower, however, soon threatened the collapse of the extreme part and thus was demolished and rebuilt with two orders of bells. The works ended in 1739.

A few decades later, in 1770, following the reform of the convents adopted by the Venetian government, the convent was suppressed and the Dominicans had to leave the structure which was subsequently bought in 1771 by the Augustinian nuns of the nearby convent of S. Maria degli Angeli. Between 1771 and 1774 some structural modifications were started which adapted the building according to the needs of the nuns. In 1808, following the abolition of this convent, the Augustinians abandoned the building. Subsequently, a private individual, Antonio Villalta, bought the building and in 1812 decided to demolish the church and bell tower to obtain construction material.

In the following years the convent was used as a barracks and the local administrators, who regained possession of the property in 1853, decided to expand the complex by adding the wing where the church had been demolished and turned it into a barrack.

In 1866, when Pordenone and Friuli were annexed to the Kingdom of Italy, the use of the convent ended as barracks: from 1872 the northern body and part of the west wing of the complex hosted elementary schools and above all the new technical school. On the roof was also installed a meteorological observatory for student exercises, which remained in operation until the Second World War. In the other wing of the building, the southern wing and part of the western wing, the structures were modified to obtain suitable spaces to house the Court. The works radically changed the authentic aspect of the convent: on all the facades most of the existing windows were closed and the same distribution system underwent transformations giving the building the plant of today.

During the First World War the complex became a military hospital. In 1919 they were carried out on the building restoration works to allow the restoration of its previous functions of school and Palazzo di Giustizia. In 1923 the Court was suppressed and only the district court remained. From 1967 until 2000 the building was the seat of higher education institutions. From 2003 to 2010 the former Dominican convent was involved in an important restoration project that transformed it into the new multimedia library of the city of Pordenone.

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