

The Collegio Papio in Ascona

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The second college was located in the territory of Ticino itself. In 1580 Bartolomeo Papio, a native of Ascona who had grown rich in Rome, where he had served the Orsini family, left 25,000 scudi to the commune of Ascona for the erection of a seminary, on condition that his fellow citizens complete the project within three years. Borromeo, commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII, negotiated the execution of the bequest with the commune. After the sale of Papio's house, the school opened in October 1584.¹ Borromeo wanted the college to serve as a Jesuit seminary in the Catholic south of the Confederation and as a bulwark against the Protestant influence from beyond the Alps. He sponsored the foundation in the year of his death.² The building, erected between 1585 and 1592 in Renaissance style on a design by Pellegrino Tibaldi, rose next to the church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, which belonged to a Dominican convent. Its courtyard has a portico and loggias with twenty-eight Tuscan columns and twentyseven reliefs in stucco, marble and granite bearing the arms of the college's patrons, from popes and bishops to the apostolic administrators of the Ticinese diocese after 1885.³

The Collegio Papio illustrates the economic basis of the Catholic reform in the region. It was financed by an emigrant fortune. The capital that Papio had earned in Rome returned to Ascona in the form of land, buildings and rents that supported teachers and pupils. The pattern is the same as that of the many smaller foundations described in Chapter A.III: the emigrant converts his earnings abroad into a perpetual endowment at home, places it under ecclesiastical supervision and thereby secures both its permanence and his memory. The later history of the college shows the durability of such an endowment, although the Jesuits never took it over. In 1616 Cardinal Federico Borromeo entrusted it to the Oblates of Milan, who ran it until the eighteenth century. The canton secularized it in 1852. In 1879 it was entrusted to the bishop of Como and in 1885 to the apostolic administration of Lugano. The Salesians directed it from 1894 to 1910, the

Assumptionists from 1910 to 1914 and the Benedictines from 1924.⁴ A sixteenth-century emigrant's bequest thus served its purpose as a school for well over three centuries, through secularization and repeated changes of management.

1 Capuchins, Jesuits and the network of convents

The colleges were supported by the religious orders. The Capuchins, a reformed branch of the Franciscans founded in Italy in the 1520s, built their first convent on Swiss soil at Bigorio above Lugano in 1535, under the responsibility of Pacifico Carli. At the request of leaders from Uri and Nidwalden, Borromeo promoted their expansion into central Switzerland, where the first German-speaking convents were founded at Altdorf in 1581, Stans in 1582 and Lucerne in 1583. A Swiss Capuchin province with its seat in Lucerne followed in 1589. The Ticinese convents remained under the province of Milan until they became a custody in 1784 and a province of their own, with its seat in Lugano, in 1845.⁵ Their popular preaching, their poverty and their presence in small towns made them the most effective missionaries of the Catholic reform in rural Switzerland. The Jesuits, whom Borromeo had wanted for Ascona, settled in Lucerne in 1574, where a college followed in 1577, and opened the college of St Michael in Fribourg in 1582. Their colleges trained the urban elites of the Catholic cantons. In the Italian bailiwicks the older orders, Franciscans, Dominicans and Humiliati, were reformed or replaced, and new convents of Capuchins and Ursulines followed in the seventeenth century.⁶

The convents had an economic side that matters for this chapter. They received endowments, held land and rents, lent money on *censo* and acted as depositaries for the savings of local families. The Capuchins, bound to strict poverty, were an exception, since their rule forbade them to own property and they lived from alms. The other houses were part of the network of ecclesiastical lenders discussed below.

2 Notes

1. Rosanna Janke and Rodolfo Huber, "Ascona", in DSS, version of 25 August 2009, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/002086/2009-08-25/> (bequest of 25,000 scudi in 1580, three-year condition, Borromeo's negotiations on behalf of Gregory XIII, school from October 1584); Ticino Turismo, "Collegio Papio", <https://www.ticino.ch/it/commons/details/Collegio-Papio/2805.html> (service with the Orsini; Borromeo's intention of a Jesuit seminary).



2. Crivelli, "Borromeo, Carlo" (above): "patrocinando la fondazione del collegio Papio di Ascona (1584)". ↩
3. Ticino Turismo, "Collegio Papio" (as above), which names the architect "Tibaldo Pellegrino", i.e. Pellegrino Tibaldi (Pellegrino Pellegrini); Janke and Huber (as above) for the building period 1585–1592. ↩
4. Janke and Huber, "Ascona" (as above). ↩
5. Christian Schweizer, "Cappuccini", in DSS, version of 14 October 2009, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/011708/>. ↩
6. "Jesuiten", in HLS (above): first settlement in Lucerne in 1574, college (Gymnasium) from 1577; college of St Michael in Fribourg opened in 1582. Urban Fink, "Bonomi, Giovanni Francesco", in DSS (above), on Bonomi's promotion of the Fribourg foundation in 1580. ↩

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