

THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE VILLAGE OF PEVERAGNO

The dominant detail of the village coat of arms is tree with long green branches centrally situated in a grassy landscape and flanked by stylised representations of the houses and churches in the village. Symmetrically located at the base of the tree are two lilies.

The present coat of arms is derived, maintaining intact the characteristics and original meanings, from the oldest and most genuine example which appears as a 14th century fresco on the archway of the door to the refuge.

It is from this tree, situated on a grassy landscape with its long green branches and black peppercorns (from the Latin “piper”) that the etymology of the name Piperanium is derived. The two heraldic lilies on a set in a golden background and flanking the tree are probably intended to record the origins of the village at the time of Angevin dominion.

THE ORIGINS OF THE VILLAGE NAME

There are four hypotheses about the origins of the name, and given current documentation, it is not possible to determine the exactness of any. The four theories are listed below:

From an imaginary *Piper* (although in documents relating to Certosa di Pesio - a nearby monastery - the name *Piperis* often appears)

From a historic family name originating from the nearby village of Morozzo, Pipa; this family owned vast estates in and around Morozzo, Chiusa Pesio and Cuneo.

From *Pipara*, barbaric name given to Cornelia Saponina, wife of the Emperor Gallieno, who probably followed or sympathised with Christianity.

From the aristocratic name *Papirius*.

FOUNDATION PERIOD (FIRST SETTLEMENTS)

Within the territory where the village now stands there were three settlements at different historical times and locations.

Il Castelvechio di Peveragno (Castrum vetelum). In the hilly area where now stands the hamlet called Montefallonio there is archaeological evidence for an original stronghold dating from mid way through the third century AD

Il Castello di Forfice (Forfice Castle). Situated in the Hamlet of Madonna dei Boschi di Peveragno. Some ruins of the castle are still visible. The name Forfice appears for the first time in a document dated 1151.

Il Castello e la Villa di Peveragno (The castle and Villa of Peveragno). Down the valley from the Castello di Forfice and contemporary with the latter's decline as a settlement in the second half of the thirteenth century. This new name appeared for the first time in a document dated 25 September 1299.

The first statutes published relating to the “new” village of Peveragno were sent to Marquis Theodore II of Monferrato in 1384. The village was about a century old. The statutes were approved by the Marquis in the same year and subsequently subject to various modifications. A copy of the original statutes is kept in the state archives in Turin and in the village library.

FROM THE ORIGINAL COMMUNITY TO THE PRESENT DAY

Within Peveragno's territory, on the summit of Moncalvino, one Neolithic and two Palaeolithic axes have been unearthed, sure evidence of the presence of primitive cave dwellers. Numerous archaeological findings and still visible tracts of ancient walls in the hilly zone around the hamlet of Montefallonio provide evidence for a primitive, fortified urban settlement which was established for defence and presumably dates from the third century AD. The settlement is located in the hamlet of Madonna dei Boschi where the ruins of the Castle and Villa di Forfice are still visible.

The name Forfice first appears in a document dated 1151 referring to Furcaldo di Forfice. The settlement, dominated by the castle, is situated about 2km from present day Peveragno. Towards the end of 1200, during the decline of nearby Forfice, Peveragno began to grow and develop, although the name of the village only appears for the first time in official notary documents in 1299.

For a certain period (at least until 1356) Peveragno and Forfice formed a single community. Then, probably as a result of population increase, only Peveragno, situated in a position where living and defence were advantaged, remained. At the time of its foundation, Peveragno and its surrounding territory was the property of the bishop of Asti and part of the district of Cuneo. In the short period between 1369 and 1396 it was owned by the Marquis of Monferrato. The first statutes formally stating the foundation of the village are dated 1384, duly approved by Marquis Theodore II of Monferrato.

In 1396, after some years of conflict, the village fell to the Acaia and following this, in 1419, to the Savoy who maintained ownership, exercising power through local lords and representatives nominated by themselves.

In this situation Peveragno underwent all the ups and downs which went with being part of the Savoy state until the creation of the Kingdom of Italy.

The 15th century was extremely difficult for the Peveragno community whose survival depended on mountain agriculture, continually threatened by bad weather, famine and domestic animals decimated by disease or stolen by bandits.

The 16th century proved equally difficult mainly due to the movement of French forces into Italy and the war between Spain and France which involved the Savoy State until its destruction in 1559. In this same year, however, peace was made, a treaty was signed and Duke Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy returned to reign over Piedmont.

Peveragno obtained from the Duke reconfirmation of its statutes and rights. The second half of the 16th century and to an even greater degree the 17th century were accompanied, like previous times, by terrible plague, famine and war made victims of an already battered and population. Their situation was made worse by disorienting passages of feudal landlords and rights which commonly took place under the princes of the house of Savoy throughout their reign.

These were also the years of the inquisition, which hit the community of Peveragno badly, particularly through the actions of the inquisitor Biagio of Berra.

In 1621 Francesco and Cesare Grimaldi of Boglio became leaders with the title of Count.

The Grimaldi dominium over Peveragno and Boves lasted until the end of the 18th century when they were overturned by the events surrounding the French revolution which cancelled definitively the old systems of government.

Throughout this century Piedmont, like all Europe, was shaken by political, social and military events. Along with other communities, Peveragno paid an enormous price in terms of blood and suffering.

The most tragic event happened in 1744 when, during the war of succession to the Austrian throne, French and Spanish troops invaded Piedmont and set the territory surrounding Cuneo to sword and fire.

Peveragno rebelled against the arrogance of the enemy and was sacked and burned 3 times. With the advent of the Napoleonic empire (1800) the situation stabilised and improved, although the village still had to pay a high price in blood and resources as their contribution to imperial campaigns. The population increased to reach a record 7878 inhabitants in 1895. More recently, the part played by Peveragno in the events of the 19th and 20th centuries has been important, painful and rich in glory (The awarding of the gold medal for military valour to Major Pietro Toselli in Eritrea and the massacre in Piazza Paschetta during resistance to Nazism are two examples).

On 2 February 2005 The then President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, invested

“This small community, during the tragic days of the war of liberation, suffered ferocious reprisals from Nazi troops who rounded up thirty of its citizens, mainly women and elderly men, and brutally massacred them with machine gunfire. The example of those fallen was one of courage, the spirit of freedom and patriotism”.

10 January 1944- Peveragno (CN)

ILLUSTRIOUS CITIZENS

Vittorio Bersezio (1828-1900). Journalist, comic writer and novelist with various productions in Italian and in Piedmont's dialect. "Le miserie di Monsù Travet" (The misadventures of Mr. Travet) is a universally recognised masterpiece.

Francesco Federico Campana (1771-1807). Commander of the Turin National Guard and afterwards Prefect of Marengo. An excellent soldier and administrator, he was general of Napoleon's brigade at the age of 35. He died in battle.

Angelo Campana (1785-?). Brother to Federico, with the French Dragoons he won the medal of The Legion of Honour. Later he entered the Sardinian army and was promoted to the rank of General and subsequently nominated Military Governor of Turin.

Filippo Antonio Campana (1827-1906). Took part in the first two wars of independence and was wounded in the battle of Peschiera. After the Battle of Redone at Pozzolungo he earned the Silver Medal for Military Valour.

Don Bartolomeo Prieri (1801-1871). was appointed professor of Greek at The University of Turin (1801-1871).

Giovanni Mario Pellegrini (1836-1904). Took part as a second lieutenant in the infantry during the campaign for independence and Italian Unification, earning The Silver Medal for heroic acts carried out at Mola di Gaeta. He became Mayor of Peveragno and Provincial councillor.

Carlo Vigna (1831-1907). Fought in the First War of Independence and Crimea expedition, earning an honourable mention and a French military medal. After San Martino and that which followed he was decorated with two Silver Medals for military valour.

Sister Eleonora Caterina Tassone (?-1901). On missionary work in Brazil she was killed at Alto Alegre along with six fellow nuns.