

Origins and history of the Casa del Parco

The farms are the emblem of peasant civilization as well as visible testimony, intimately linked to regional history, of the type of economic and social organization of the territory of the typical landowner. The birth of the farms, vast land complexes formed by substantial rustic aggregates belonging to the nobility or the Church, was often a product of the baronial colonization of vast interior, abandoned and uncultivated areas, which became systematic between the 16th and 18th centuries. A model of community settlement and self-sustaining society, the complex farms are essentially born of the need to ensure a better administration of large farms within which communities of families, farmers and settlers marked their lives according to the rhythms of the land and the cultivated crops.

Located in the northern part of an irregularly-planted enclosure that delimits its area of relevance, the Marina farm is located along the provincial that connects Manduria to St. Peter in Bevagna, the main communication route already in ancient times between the city and the Ionic coast. The proximity to the sea, which is only 2 km from here, gives rise to the name of this splendid example of a fortified rural building dating back to the 16th century.

In the same context, which prompted the kings of Spain, in the mid-16th century, to erect an articulated coastal defensive system consisting of watchtowers, these rural complexes also had to take the form of a fortification to cope with any attempts at raids by marauders from the sea, mostly Turks, or at the hands of brigands active on the territory. From offensive actions of such an entity, which were in the character of rapid incursions aimed mainly at looting, one could be protected simply by barricading ourselves in environments made inaccessible from the outside, a reason that prompted to equip systems suitable for the



purpose, elementary and however effective, the farms along the coast of Salentino.

The imposing main factory body, built entirely of limestone, is spread over two floors and originally had the classic tower shape with accesses defended on all sides by caditoia, double on the most vulnerable points, which we can still identify at the crowning height of the building. Inside the premises are barrel and star vaulted in line with the traditional construction technique typical of the Salentine area and the thick walls, designed to contain the thrust of the covers, give the construction a massive appearance typical of the stone cutting architecture.

The ground floor is composed of milk processing compartments while a narrow external staircase allows to reach the residential environments placed on the first floor to which, in the past, it was possible to access through a drawbridge whose existence is evidenced by the recess in the wall that housed it once hoisted.

The tower over time has been flanked by a factory body, also structured on two floors. The large, full-length arches visible on the west facade and the loggia that these underlie give a less introverted character to the construction and are testimony to an extension carried out in the era after the construction of the farm, evidently at a time when the danger of raids and incursions had now disappeared.

Outside that building, the mouth of a tank once part of an 'ingenuity' otherwise known as noria, a functioning underground water supply mechanism thanks to an animal-driven transmission system, is still visible.

Adjacent to the tower are two rooms with prevailing longitudinal development on the east-west axis and a single floor above ground that housed the stables with feeders, the premises for the processing of milk and its derivatives and for the storage of the crop.



In the 18th century the farm and the surrounding land belonged to the noblewoman Marianna Giannuzzi who in her will, dating back to 1796, donated this and other possessions to the Mount of Pieta of Manduria.

Current destination

Today it is owned by the Municipality of Manduria, home to the Natural Reserves of the Eastern Tarantino Coast and the ARIF Puglia detachment of Manduria. Its premises welcome numerous activities carried out by the Reserves as part of the strategy of dissemination and protection of natural heritage. The initiatives hosted in the Marina farm involve in particular the new generations and are aimed at the development of a conscious knowledge of the protected areas of the territory and its biodiversity.

