

## Corbetta: from its origins to now ③

The origins of Corbetta trace back to the Celts (8th century BC) when Corbetta was one of the 'pagi', a typical Gaul economic-political institution. The village later passed under the Roman domination, took up the name 'Curia Picta' and totally changed its shape thanks to a commercial expansion policy. The spreading of Christian religion in the area around Milan took place in the 5th century AD and affected our town too, as witnessed by the remains of the early Christian basilica found during some excavations under the Collegiate Church in 1971. The following centuries witnessed the alternation of the Goths (6th century) and of the Lombards (7th and 8th century) on our territory. The Franks followed the Lombards after they had reached Italy to help the Pope against the Lombard King Desiderius. The Lombard 'Curia Picta' then became a possession of the archbishop of Milan Ariberto Intimiano under the name 'Castrum Sancti Ambrosii'. The Spanish domination, marked by a divestment policy to the benefit of the mother country, lasted until 1706. The city later passed under the Austrian reign with the treaty of Utrecht and Rastadt (1714). This period marked the local economic rebirth due to the cautious administrative policy started first by Charles V and later by Marie Therese.

The most concrete sign of the new richness is the intense building activity. The works to erect the most beautiful villas in Corbetta started in the middle of the 17th century when the remains of the castle were used as a private dwelling after its strategic importance had ended.

Thus, marvellous villas were built in Corbetta, which we can still admire nowadays. Its closeness to the Naviglio Grande (started in 1177) is paramount for the development of this peculiar urban phenomenon. The villas were actually erected to be the summer-houses for the richest Milanese families. Some of them also started small farms in the neighbourhoods of their mansions.

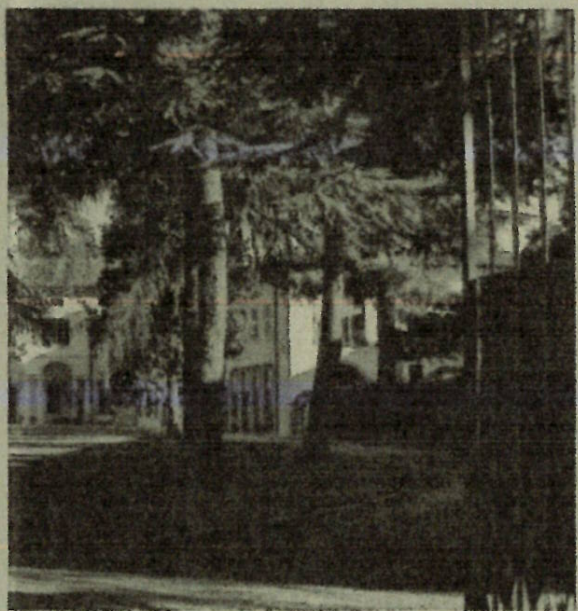
During the second war of independence, Corbetta was the last Austrian outpost under general Giulay. The consequences of the fights in those years were Milan's access into the reign of Italy (1859) and the national unity. At the time of Italy's unification, Corbetta had 4789 inhabitants and showed a decently active economic life. The famous Garbade Legn was the tramway that, as of 1879, connected Milan to Magenta, passing through Corbetta, hence a very important means of transportation for our 'commuters'. At the beginning of the 20th century, the industrialization began and the first industries settled in Corbetta causing a change in the local demographic structure.

## Historical villas in Corbetta

### Villa Frisiani Mereghetti

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The villa was built around 1652 by Gottardo Frisiani. The architect responsible for the project design was Francesco Maria Richini, one of the most important architects in Lombardy at the time. Double columns in granite from Baveno support the three arches in the façade: five openings are located symmetrically on the upper floor. The rear façade overlooking one of the largest gardens in Corbetta in the past, crossed by the Madonna water trough, is in exposed bricks and shows two protruding side bodies to close the composition. The brothers Giovanni Stefano and Giuseppe Montalto – who had been working in Corbetta in 1656 – realized the most important paintings inside.



## Ville storiche corbettesi Historical villas in Corbetta

### Villa Borri Manzoli 8

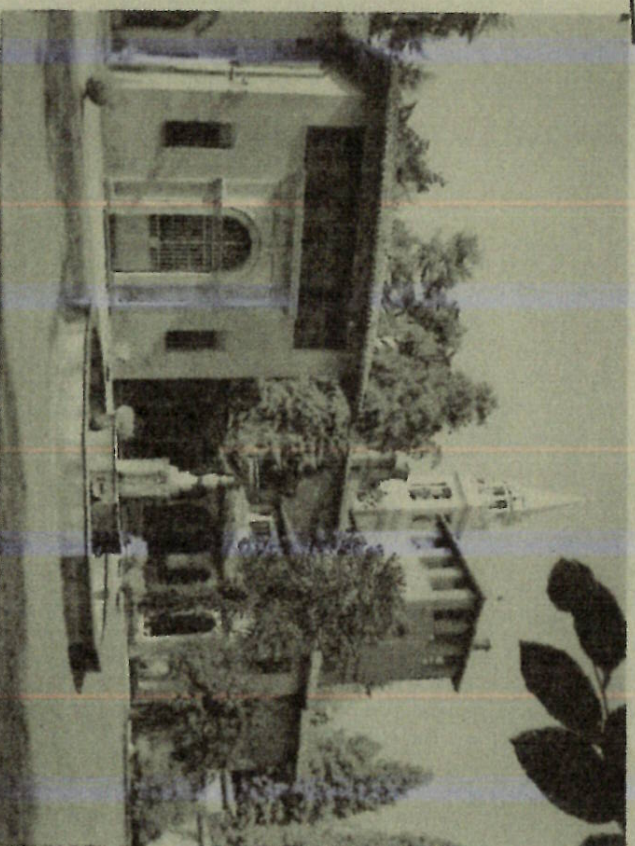
The Borris appeared among the largest landowners in Corbetta already in the second half of the 13th century. They were also active in the chapter that administered the Sanctuary until the 17th century. The family's last heir, Alda, married the noble Giovanni Manzoli in 1814: her dowry included the surrounding agricultural lands and buildings. Villa Borri-Manzoli was built in the first years of the 18th century and it was extended and completed in the 19th century. The elevation protruding from the roof was definitely made in the 19th century. Realized with the materials from the demolished castle, the villa seems to have included some of its parts: the walls of the main façades, in fact, diverge of about 7 degrees. The main façade overlooking the square is in exposed bricks and its appearance is made lighter by some arches in white stone with a typical late Baroque style. The façade overlooking the garden is neoclassical, instead. The interiors show a neoclassical taste in the rooms, with vaults, frescoes, bas-reliefs and stuccoes.



## Castelleto or Villa Corbellini

The first news about the Castle appeared around the 9th/11th century. The village of Corbetta became a possession of the Archbishop of Milan under the name 'Castrum Sancti Ambrosii'. Conrad the Salic put the castle under siege during his war against Archbishop Aribert de Intimian. Thereafter, with the advent of the Visconti in 1270, Gian Galeazzo ordered its extension and he stayed here for some time, flattered by the pleasures of hunting. During the wars in the Monferrato area, the castle often hosted the Dukes Mathew. Gian Galeazzo and Philip Maria Visconti, after they had either won or lost a battle. The defensive role of the Castle, a nodal point along Milan's defensive belt, was probably maintained until the years of the Spanish domination. In the 17th century, it became obsolete due to new war techniques and to the new political situation and it was almost entirely dismantled.

After a number of transfers, the property later arrived in the hands of Guido Corbellini and of his heirs thereafter. The villa we can admire today is the result of several restoration and extension works completed by Architect Piero Portaluppi between 1940 and 1960.



**Ville storiche corbettesi**  
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### Villa Pagani della Torre

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The villa was erected in the broken-up garden of the ancient Ca' Erba that extended from today's Via Verdi to Via Cesare Battisti. The building permit was issued on 21st March 1925 to Mrs. Luigia Bodini Pagani to 'erect an enclosed villa with annexed janitor's quarters and farmhouse in the area of Giardinone'. The historical archive of the Municipality of Corbetta still preserves the map and a drawing of the first design. It became home to Commendatore Enrico Pagani, Mrs. Luigia's husband, who was the interim Town Administrator and podestà of Corbetta from 1929 to 1933. The same family owned it until 1971 when the Municipality of Corbetta purchased it and named it after Angelo Della Torre, the child miraculously healed by the Virgin Mary in 1555. It first served as a youth centre and as the office of the municipal technical department thereafter. After the office was moved to via Cattaneo in 1985, the villa became a municipal warehouse. The villa was built in an eclectic style, mixing middle age, renaissance and baroque inspirations.

