



The Querini Stampalia Family

The first documents in which the name appears date back to the thirteenth century, but the family must have had much older origins, as it was counted among the twelve founding families of Venice. It therefore belonged to the mercantile oligarchy, although in 1310 the participation of **Marco Querini** (1245 - 1310) in the conspiracy dreamed up by Bajamonte Tiepolo against Doge Pietro Gradenigo was a black mark against the family's name; thereafter, the Querini were forever excluded from being appointed to the rank of doge, although not from the other prestigious offices of government. The Querini remained among the richest and most influential families of the city. In the fourteenth century **Zuanne Querini** was given the Greek island of Astypalaia in the Aegean in

"sovereignty from the Republic" for himself and his descendants, along with the title of conte, or count. In 1537, the island fell into Turkish hands. Stampalia, writes Giovanni in his will, is the "nickname" of his branch of the family, but was used only by "my father Alvise in 1808 in Milan at the time of the Kingdom of Italy, when he was there as councillor of State, to distinguish himself from another Querini", a chamberlain at the Napoleonic court. In Venice, where the family "is known from the place of its domicile as Querini di Santa Maria Formosa", the name Stampalia "is confusing, as many believe it is a surname and call me by it. When I have been able to, I have omitted it, but in this my Testament I thought it best to use it, as many of my assets are registered under this

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name in the Census and I do not wish questions to be raised...".

By the fourteenth century the Querini family already owned houses in Santa Maria Formosa. In the sixteenth century the building was constructed in which the successive generations would live until the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, **Polo Querini** (1654 - 1728) set up the first nucleus of art collections in a gallery along the lines of the many picture galleries that were then being established in Italy and abroad, as evidenced by his letters preserved in the family's archive. His son, Cardinal **Angelo Maria Querini** (1680 - 1755), maintained a busy correspondence, preserved in the archive, with intellectuals and sovereigns throughout Europe, from Voltaire to Frederick II of Prussia. He also founded the Biblioteca Querininiana in Brescia and enriched the family one. But it was **Andrea Domenico Querini** (1710 - 1795), Polo's grandson, who was the key figure of the eighteenth century. Wise and farsighted – he was the inspiration for the protagonist of the comedy written by his friend Carlo

Goldoni, The prudent man – he assured stability for the family's property through a series of investments in buildings and land. Under him, the Library increased by many volumes, which are still identifiable by the presence of his ex libris.

His wife **Elena Mocenigo** (1710 - circa 1780) has left us a large collection of letters to Andrea, who was absorbed in developing the mainland properties. Elena wrote to him during those long separations, telling him stories of domestic life and "chronicles" of what was going on in town.

Another interesting source for the history of the Querini is the exchange of letters between the couple's son, **Zuane Antonio Querini** (1733 - 1793), ambassador in Madrid between 1768 and 1773, and his wife **Caterina Contarini Dal Zaffo** (1738 - 1807), from which emerge their habits, relations and daily events.

Zuane's children belong to the generation that witnessed the French Revolution of 1789 and the fall of the Serenissima in 1797 with the need to rethink the new order, which was wholly different to that of the Ancien régime.

Gerolamo Baseggio, *Isolario of Greece* ↓



Alvise Querini (1758 - 1834), the last ambassador of the Republic of Venice in France from 1795 to 1797, held important positions under the initial Austrian domination, but also in Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy and then in the Lombardo-Veneto kingdom, succeeding in preserving a large part of the family's property, although it had been much reduced by divisions and sales after the end of the Republic. Passed down to his son **Giovanni Querini**, these assets increased again thanks to the inheritance he received from his paternal uncle Gerolamo and from his maternal uncle Gasparo Lippomano. A few months before his death, he also received the estate of his deceased sister, Caterina, the heir in turn of the property of her husband, conte Girolamo Polcastro of Padua. This property included the Pompeian-style drawing room designed by Giuseppe Jappelli, which still furnishes the House Museum.

Giovanni was a skilled administrator and businessman. He improved the income from the agricultural land, modernising cultivation techniques and sales. In 1851, in London, the silk of the Campo di Pietra spinning mill in Treviso won a prize for quality,

which brought the yarns of the Veneto to the forefront of the international market.

A lover of science, he visited the Universal Expositions of London in 1851 and Paris in 1855 and 1867 and conducted the first experiments with electrical lighting in Venice.

Through his will, Giovanni donated his collection of art, archives and family library to the city: this provides an account of the personal history of the Querini Stampalia family within the great history of Venice, all the more extraordinary for its having remained intact in the family home.

House Museum: Red drawing room ↓

