

CARDINAL BRANDA CASTIGLIONI

Cardinal Branda Castiglioni was born in Milan on the 4th of February 1350 to a noble and illustrious family. Well educated, he completed his studies in Pavia, graduating in Civil and Canon Law.

In 1388 he became Professor of Law at the University of Pavia and in 1389 Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the Lord of Milan, sent him to the court of Pope Bonifacio IX to obtain recognition for the University of Pavia. On that occasion he demonstrated excellent diplomatic ability and obtained everything asked of him. He was subsequently invited to join the ecclesiastic hierarchy with important tasks to undertake, and was appointed as an Ambassador to the Papacy.

Subsequently, in 1404, he was appointed Bishop of Piacenza and in 1409 he participated in the Council of Pisa, where he distinguished himself with his wise counsel concerning the long standing problem of the Great Schism between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Christians.

His talents were again recognized and in 1414 he was appointed Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. In the same year he participated in the Council of Costanza. He was also appointed as voter of Ottone Colonna, then of Pope Martino V, with whom he began a relationship of deep friendship. This was consolidated in 1422 when Martino V gave to Branda Castiglioni a task to build the Collegiata Church in the territory of the ancient castle.



Portrait of Cardinal Branda Castiglioni

In 1431 he participated as Council Father in the Basel Council and in 1438 and 1439 in the Councils of Ferrara and Florence.

He spent the sunset of his life in Castiglione Olona, the small village of art, planned and renovated to his design following the humanistic principles of the XV century and realized by skilled Tuscan workers. In particular the famous Masolino da Panicale and his two collaborators Lorenzo di Pietro called "il Vecchietta" and Paolo Schiavo were chosen personally by Branda Castiglioni for these important works. The ambitious project was completed around the forties of the XV century and the Cardinal, who died on the 3rd of February 1443, when aged 93, was able to appreciate most of it.

HISTORIC MONUMENTS

Branda Castiglioni MUNICIPAL MUSEUM / MAP – Museum of Plastics Art (tel. 0331/858301)

Opening Hours – **Winter timetable** (from 1st October to 31st March):

- Tuesdays-Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Sundays and holidays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- First Sunday of each month from 10.30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Closed on Mondays except on public holidays

Opening Hours – **Summer timetable** (from 1st April to 30th September):

- Tuesdays-Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Sundays and holidays from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Closed on Mondays except on public holidays

Tickets

- € 3.00 adults
- € 2.00 reduced price for children aged 6 to 12, groups of 20 or more people

- Free entry for children under 6 and for residents in Castiglione Olona



MUSEUM of the Collegiata (tel. 0331/858903)

Opening Hours – **Winter timetable** (from 1st October to 31st March):

- Tuesdays-Sundays from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.
- Closed on Mondays except on public holidays

Opening Hours – **Summer timetable** (from 1st April to 30th September):

- Tuesdays-Sundays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- First Sunday of each month from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Closed on Mondays except on public holidays

Tickets

- € 5.00 adults
- € 4.00 reduced price for over 60, groups of 20 or more people, members of Touring Club Italiano
- € 3.00 reduced price for children aged 6 to 12 and for school visits
- Free entry for children under 6

Church of the Villa

Same hours of the Museum of the Collegiata
Free entry - tel. Museum of the Collegiata

For info and bookings:

Assessorato alla Cultura di Castiglione Olona
Branda Castiglioni Municipal Museum
23, Mazzini street - 21043 Castiglione Olona (VA)
tel. +39 0331 858.301 - fax: +39 0331 824.457
e-mail: cultura@castiglioneolona.it
Tuesdays-Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.



Città di Castiglione Olona



Assessorato alla Cultura

Written by Rosanna Corbelli and Andrea Prina - thanks to Giovanni Rondelli and Les Burell for the english translation - photo Franco Conzanti - layout Roberto Carpiere - illustration Carlo Mattoni - printed by Grafiche Olona snc - © Castiglione Olona - Savizi srl - 2008

CASTIGLIONE OLONA VILLAGE



Free to live it

INTRODUCTION TO THE VILLAGE

Not far from the frenetic town of Varese, in a valley surrounded by pleasant wooded hills of the Rile Tenore Olona natural park, the ancient village of Castiglione Olona stands, proud of its noble origins.

According to a legend, the birth of Castiglione Olona is dated in AD 401 when the Roman troops of general Stilicone settled down, with his camp, on the rich banks of the Olona River. Then the historians recorded the passage of the Longobards, but only in the 1000s, when the territory became estate of the Castiglioni family, the first residential complex appeared. The feud over Castiglione Olona was always contended by the most powerful families of that time, the Visconti and the Torriani, which alternatively formed alliances with the Castiglioni.

Nowadays the ruins of the fortress and of the old boundary wall of the village remind us of the tormented events of that period, characterized by clashes and political intrigues.

The instability went on until the 1422, when the building of the Collegiata, on the ruins of the castle, marked the passage from belligerency to the spirituality.

Castiglione Olona became, under the patronage of Cardinal Branda Castiglioni (Milan 4th February 1350 – Castiglione Olona 3rd February 1443), the cradle of the Christian Humanism in Lombardy. The Cardinal relied on the most important masters of that time, the Tuscan Masolino da Panicale, the Vecchietta, Paolo Schiavo and the Lombard Brothers Solari, who understood completely the

vision: to build, ascribing to the man a social and cultural revaluation, a kind of ideal citadel/fortress artistically innovative in comparison with the Lombard cultural standard of the time. Also the other noble descendants of the Castiglioni family, resident until last century in the village, contributed to the preservation of this precious heritage. Among them the last descendent of the noble family, Earl Lodovico, like his grandfather took back into vogue the ancient love of Castiglione Olona for the arts and for its historic origins, gathering in a laboratory, known as "Polimero Arte", some of the most important Italian artists of the 1970s who, with great enthusiasm, experimented with unusual working of plastic as a new way to express creativity.

This experience relaunched the image and the artistic value of Castiglione Olona throughout the world, and the historic awareness found new strength thanks to the initiatives of the Pro Loco, founded in 1972, while the preservation and the growth of the heritage were allocated to local agencies with museums opening and the promotion of cultural events.

The protection of this splendour goes on nowadays and it is Castiglione Olona's prerogative, source of pride and attraction for every kind of visitors, from true art lovers to passing tourists. The historic center of the village welcomes the visitor with its peculiar alleys and enchants him with suggestive glimpses, guiding him to discover its precious treasures that lie at the heart of this historic place of worship, learning and culture.