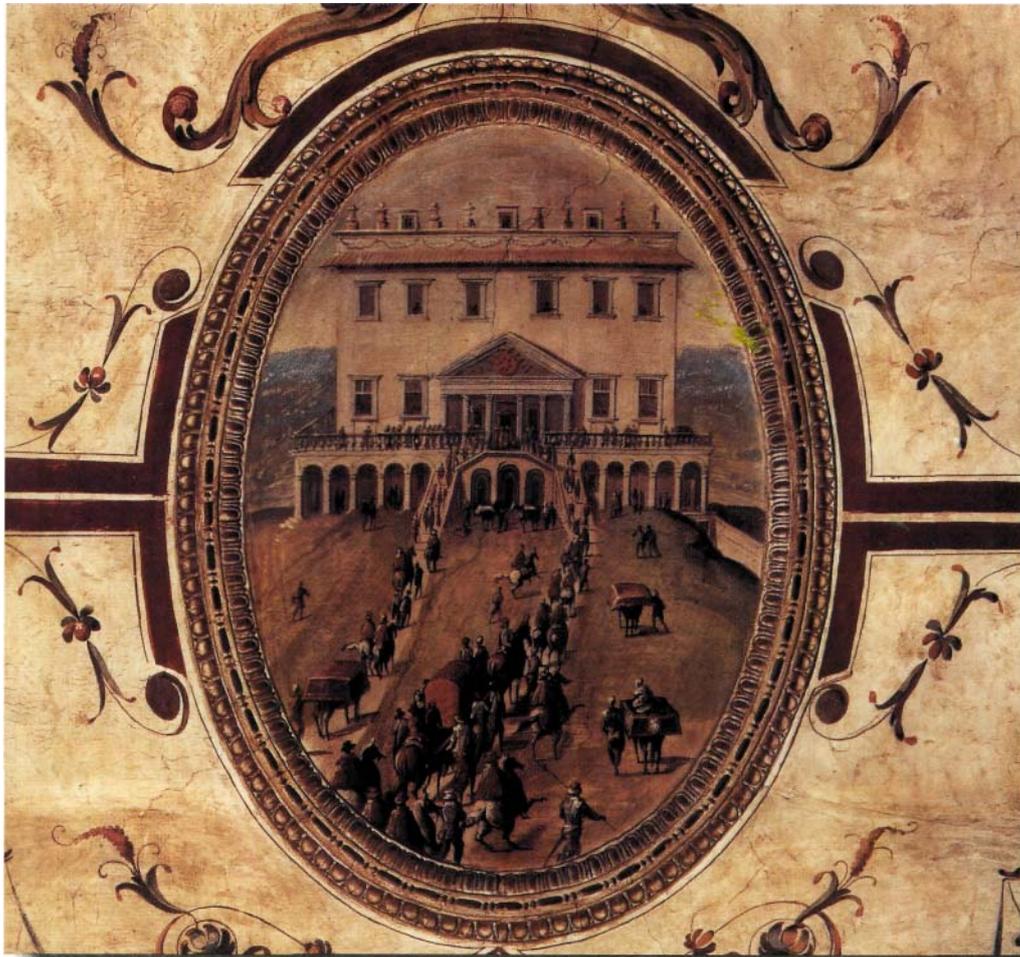


# THE MEDICI VILLA OF LORENZO THE MAGNIFICET, POGGIO A CAIANO

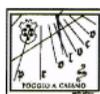


*Giovanni Stradano "Eleonora da Toledo reaches Poggio a Caiano from Naples for her marriage" - Florence Palazzo Vecchio.*

## CITY OF POGGIO A CAIANO

THE TOURIST DEPARTMENT

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



THE TOURIST ASSOTATION  
PRO - LOCO POGGIO A CAIANO



*Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano - Panoramic view.*

# MEDICI VILLA

## INSIDE

The decoration of the interior of the Villa as well as the furniture of most of the rooms reflect the Savoia's taste. In fact, after the unity of Italy in 1865 and the transfer of the capital to Florence, King Vittorio Emanuele II chose the Villa as his favourite country residence and applied his personal taste in the redecorating of many of the rooms.

### GROUND FLOOR:

#### A - Portico and facade.

The four sarcophagi which have been placed under the loggia date back to Roman times (II and IIIrd century A.D.): we can only suppose that they belonged to the Medici's collections, since they are not part of the inventory and have no historical reference except for the sarcophagus figuring the procession of Dionisi which was used for several centuries as a fountain basin in the garden of the Villa).

#### 1-Entrance

The barrel vault of the outside atrium is decorated in neo-Renaissance manner and leads into the entrance hall on the ground floor. A stone tablet on the wall recalls the beginning of the works of redecorating which were carried out under the direction of the Architect Antonio

Lahler from Piemonte (1865) in honour of the reigning house. The decoration program clearly aims to the celebration of the personality of the new inhabitant of the Villa, the first King of Italy as described in the inscription. The King's passion for hunting is also represented in the still life nature which is shown as hunting trophies.



*Theatre.*

#### 2-Theatre

The first mention of a "Comedy Theatre" inside the Villa dates 1697.

It was Margherita Luisa of Orleans, wife of Cosimo III, who decided to use this room as a theatre during her stay at the Villa after the separation from her husband.

But the theatrical activity became even more lively during the reign of her son, the Great Prince Ferdinando who cultivated all types of art. After his death the theatre, as well as the rest of the Villa, fell into decay. In fact in 1772 the stage and the

sceneries had to be restored since they had become practically useless.

As the result of an inventory conducted in 1772, we find the description of the stage and the scenery exactly as it appears today with some doubts regarding the identity of the scene painted on the curtain . In any case the classical theme - Apollo Musagete intent upon playing a lyre, Minerva resting in the shade of a tree and in the background Pegaso attempting to take flight - re-conducts the works to a group of French artists, very active in Tuscany in the late 1700's. During the visits to the Villa in the autumn months, the court of the Great Duke used the theatre mainly for plays and musical exhibitions. However, during the entire reign of Maria Luigia of Borbone, the theatre was not used while at the beginning of the 1800's a small mobile scenery was installed in the main room on the first floor. In 1809, with the arrival of Luisa Baciocchi (Napoleon's sister) , the theatrical activity totally resumed and it is probably on this occasion that the ground floor theatre was reopened.

*The organ.*



**The Organ** - This is a rare and precious instrument designed by Lorenzo Testa, a Roman, and dates 1703. It is one of the rare musical instruments of Medici origin which has survived and most certainly was used for the musical activity promoted by Prince Ferdinando who was himself an excellent cymbal player. After his death in 1713, the organ was only used to

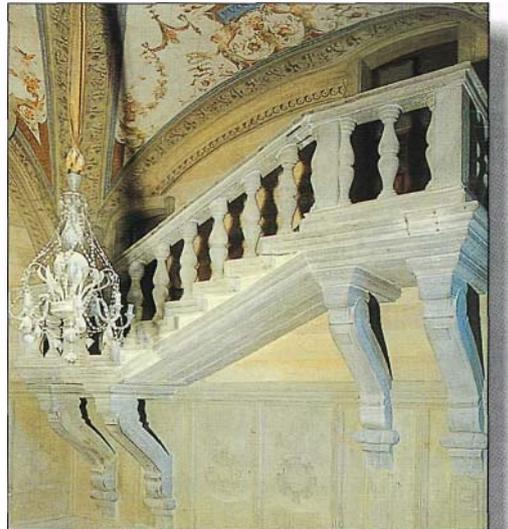
accompany religious services, at first in the chapel of the Villa of Lappoggi (1732) and afterwards from 1786 in the chapel of the Medici Villa of Poggio. The organ was removed from the chapel in the 1980's for restoration and for many years was exposed in the Gallery of the Pitti Palace in Florence. In 1996 the organ was placed back in the theatre of the Villa not only because the chapel was not the correct environment for such a precious instrument but also to restore its " profane" role.

### **3 - Biliard Room.**

The decoration of this room is one of the most interesting works of the Savoy period. Between 1865 and 1871 a large group of artists and architects on appointment of the Savoys carried out many decorative works inside the Villa. One of these artists was Domenico Ferri who carried out the decoration of this room. The scene shows a group of cheerful children at play and it also seems to recall the months of the year especially in the figures of twelve couples of puttos in the lunettes during various moments of farm life.

### **Bianca Cappello's Apartment.**

According to tradition the Northeast wing of the ground floor was the apartment of the noble Venetian woman, lover of Francesco I de' Medici, Bianca Cappello. After the death of Francesco's wife, Giovanna d'Austria, she became his second wife and the Villa was their favourite residence.



*Bianca Cappello's Apartment.*

Their contrasted love tragically came to an end right here in the Villa on October 19th 1587 a few hours apart from each other. The legend speaks of poisoning while more likely their death was caused by an illness.

#### 4 - Sitting Room

The decoration of the ceiling vault is still the original one, of the times of Bianca Capello, and is certainly a splendid example of late Renaissance decorating. Just recently the design of the staircase on one side of the room has been attributed to Giorgio Vasari. The monumental fireplace also dates back to the second half of the 1500's. This is in white marble and is attributed to two artists: Buontalenti and Ammannati. The Medici coat of arms in the center of the ceiling as well as the decoration of the side walls was carried out under the Savoy in the second half of the 1800's.

The sitting parlour leads on to Bianca Capello's bedroom, redecorated and restored in true late Renaissance style not only for the wall decorations but especially for the furnishings.

#### B - Monumental Staircase.

This staircase and its decorations were carried out between 1809-1810 as one can see from its neo-classical style. This large staircase was built to connect the ground floor to the upper floors and to replace the use of the smaller internal staircases existing in the Villa.

### FIRST FLOOR:

#### 5 - Reception and Main Entrance.

The greeting of guests and official visitors arriving at the Villa look place in this room on the first floor of the Villa which is also known as the noble floor. The decoration of the walls of this room belong to the painter Luigi Catani (1762-1840)

they celebrate the connection between Lorenzo and his Villa: Lorenzo the Magnificent receives a model of the Villa from Giuliano da Sangallo and Agnolo Poliziano crowning the head of Homer with bay leaf.

#### C-The outdoor Colonnade Portico.

The fresco by Filippino Lippi is on the east wall of the outdoor loggia and represents "Laoconte's Sacrifice". This fresco (around 1494) which was left unfinished by the author and unfortunately is in poor state of conservation, was detached from

the wall for restoration and was later placed back in its original position. The vault which covers the portico was carried out around 1495 according to Giuliano da Sangallo's design. It is one of the first examples Renaissance concrete vaults. This means it is obtained by a moulding of malleable material on a modelled case divided into sections. This is taken from Roman examples, such as the Pantheon in Rome and the one in the great baths of Villa Adriana in Tivoli.



*Filippino Lippi "Laocoonte's sacrifice", fresco.*

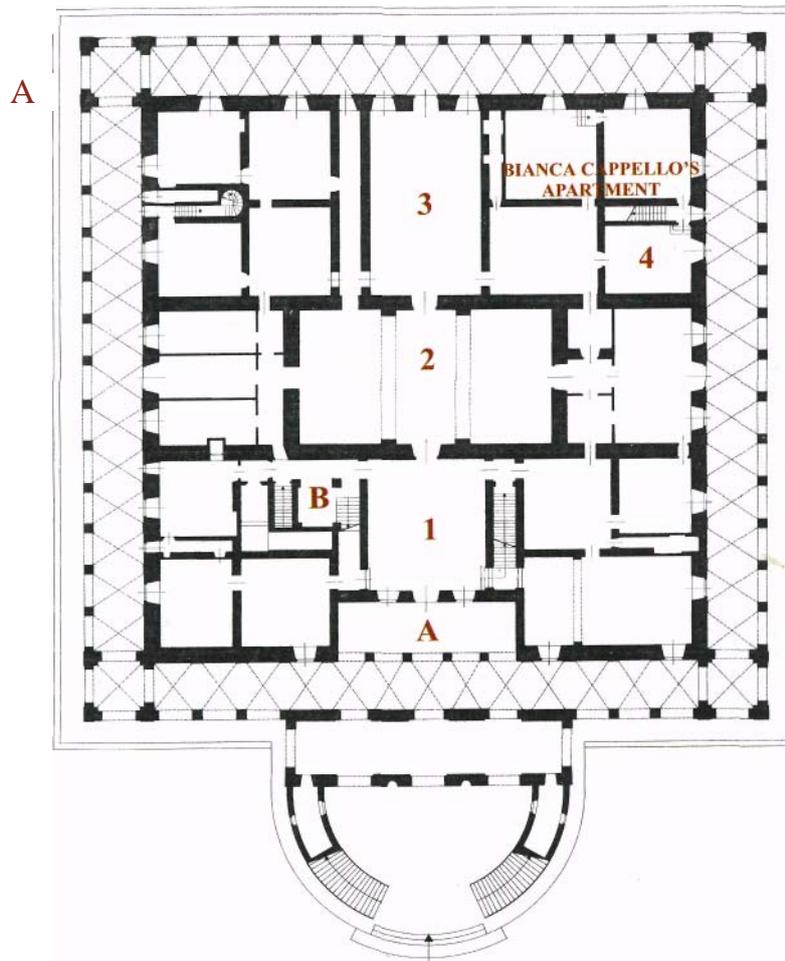
#### 6 - The Freize.

The frieze in glazed terracotta was removed from the facade to undergo restoration after which it was displayed in this room to avoid further deterioration. A copy carried out by the art institute of the Richard Ginori porcelain factory in Sesto Fiorentino

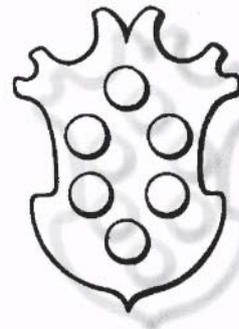
was set up in its original position on the facade of the Villa. Since a documentation regarding the frieze is missing there are many doubts regarding the period it dates back to as well as the meaning of the images. It is generally agreed that the author is Andrea Sansovino (1460 - 1529) who carried out the work

during his youth under the supervision of Giuliano da Sangallo. However others attribute it to Bertoldo di Giovanni (master of young Michelangelo). In recent times the critic has also supposed the work was carried out in two different periods, initially under Lorenzo the Magnificent and later on under his son, Pope Leo X. The frieze is divided in five episodes where the theme is an allegory of mythical, cosmic and

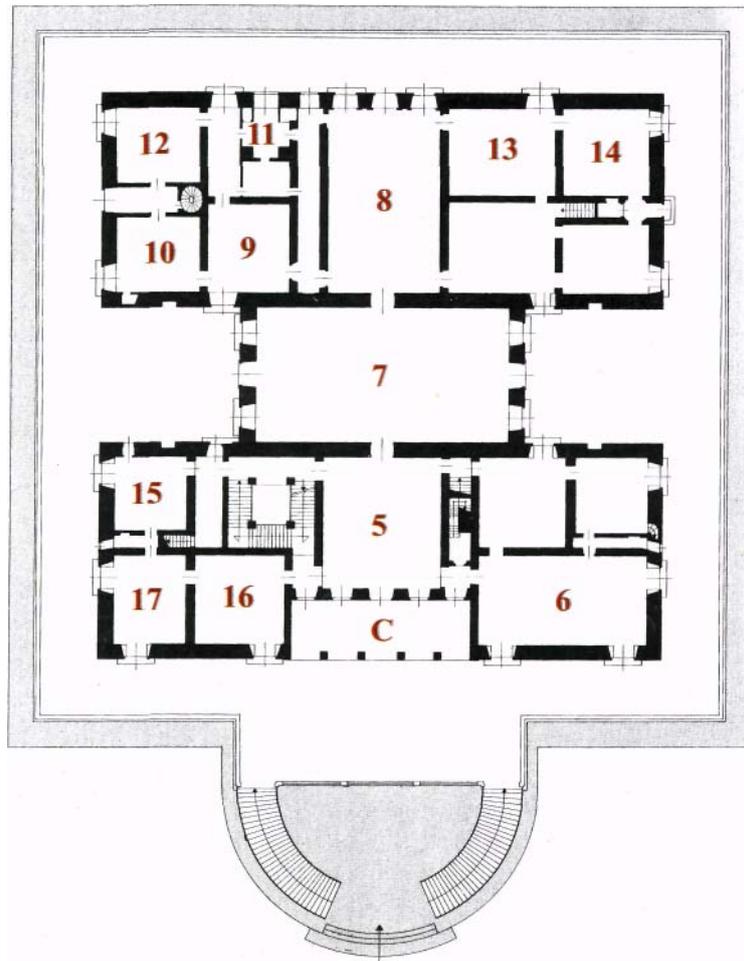
## PLAN OF THE GROUND FLOOR LEGEND



- Portico and facade B
- Monumental Staircase
- 1 Entrance
- 2 Theatre
- 3 Biliard Room
- 4 Sitting Room



## PLAN OF THE FIRST FLOOR



### LEGEND

- |    |                               |    |                                       |
|----|-------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|
| C  | The outdoor Colonnade Portico | 11 | Bathroom                              |
| 5  | Reception and Main Entrance   | 12 | Bedroom                               |
| 6  | The Freize                    | 13 | Reception Room                        |
| 7  | Hall of Leo X                 | 14 | Bedroom                               |
| 8  | The Dinig Room                | 15 | King Vittorio Emanuele's Camp Bedroom |
| 9  | Main Sitting Room             | 16 | Parlour - Studio                      |
| 10 | Small Sitting Parlour         | 17 | Parlour - ex bedroom                  |



Andrea Sansovino, and assistants, glazed terracotta frieze, particular of the fifth panel, "The rising of the Sun chariot".

earthly elements also based on Plato's myth of the story of the soul, although the celebration of the Medici family is clearly visible.



Pontormo, "Lunette depicting Vertumnus and Pomona".

### 7-Hall of Leo X

The display of the noble floor is centered around the Hall of Leo X, since this room leads to the other main rooms and on the sides faces the exterior.

The main hall of the Villa with its central position highly celebrates the Medici family through the works of Franciabigio, Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo by the wish of Leo X between 1519 and 1521.

The decorative program, where episodes from Roman history recall and refer to glorious moments of the political life of Cosimo the Elder

and Lorenzo the Magnificent, was interrupted at the death of Leo X (1521) and was completed nearly sixty years later (1578-1582) by Alessandro Allori on appointment of Francesco I. Allori filled in the scenes with figures and inserted large images of allegorical virtues along the upper part of the walls. He also created architectural partitions thus giving more scenographic effects to the entire room.

Starting from your right on entering the hall : Alessandro Allori "The council Flaminio speaks to the Achei council" This refers to the speech given by Lorenzo the Magnificent during his participation in the Diet of Cremona. Proceeding virtues: Justice, Virtù, Pity also by Allori.



A. Allori, "The Numidian King Syphax receives Scipio".

In the lunette "Vertumnus and Pomona" by Jacopo Carnicci also known as Pontormo (1494-1556). This fresco in the lunette portrays the rural divinities Vertumnus and Pomona surrounded by a

group of farmers and it represents, together with the terracotta frieze and the fresco by Filippino Lippi, the original iconographical program which Lorenzo had desired for the Villa.

In the next section "The Return of Cicero from exile" by Francesco di Cristofano more commonly known as Franciabigio (1482-1525), recalls the return of Cosimo the Elder from exile. Later the scene was extended by Alessandro Allori.

Above the door - allegory of three virtues and in the third section "Siface, King of Numidia receiving Scipio" refers to Lorenzo's visit to Ferdinando d'Aragona in Naples. (Alessandro Allori)

Along the upper part of the wall - three virtues - Fame, Glory and Honour and in the lunette "The Esperidi Garden" also by Alessandro Allori.



Andrea del Sarto "The tribute to Caesar", fresco.

In the last section next to the main door "The Tribute to Caesar" by Andrea del Sarto (and finished by Alessandro Allori) which refers to the gifts sent to the Sultan of Egypt by Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1487. Three virtues complete the decorative cycle of the hall. The hall is covered by a barrel vault designed in small sections. According to Vasari this was designed in part by Giuliano da Sangallo and in part by Andrea di Cosimo Feltrini. As far as the furnishings are concerned, with the arrival of the reigning house in 1865 most of the pieces were sent down from Torino or from one of their other noble residences, such is the case of the hall where we find furniture from the Reggia of Parma. These are actually pieces of Venetian origin dating to the end of the 1500's early 1600's,

and were partially redecorated in the 1800's under the reigning house of Naples, the Borboni.

### **8 - The Dining Room.**

The large fresco in the center of the ceiling which represents The Apotheosis of Cosimo, the father of his country by Domenico Gabbiani on appointment of Prince Ferdinando, is all that's left of the original baroque design of the room. In fact in 1812 the rich decorations in stucco were removed. The austere decoration in gold stucco and paper mache was probably done during the Savoy period by a group of artists from Piemonte under the direction of the architect Antonio Sailer. Apartment of the Countess of Mirafiori. Since 1809 this was Elisa Baciocchi's (Napoleon's sister's) bedroom. In 1865 the rooms were redecorated to give hospitality to "la bella Rusin", Rosina Vercellana who became the countess of Mirafiori and morganatic wife of King Vittorio Emanuele II.

### **9 - Main Sitting Room.**

The works of preservation carried out in this room in the 70's inside the Villa, brought back to life the decoration which had been covered with wall paper during the Savoy period. The decoration is certainly of a Tuscan painter, possibly Luigi Catani in consideration of the neo-classical characters both in style as in choice of the subjects and was carried out during the period that Napoleon's sister, the grand Duchess Luisa Baciocchi, lived in the Villa.

### **10 - Small Sitting Parlour**

Even the decoration of this smaller room which was used by Bella Rosina as a studio and needlework room, dates back to the period of Elisa Baciocchi.

### **11-Bathroom**

This room is a true example of French *salle de bain* including its typical monumental bathtub and was done between 1811-1812 for Napoleon's sister Elisa Baciocchi who lived in the Villa for a few years. The works were carried out by the Architect Giuseppe Cacialli who certainly joined in the creation of the neo-classical decorative elements.

In the two lunettes: Achille bathing in the Lete River and Teti attending to Achille's departure.

### **12-Bedroom**

With the exception of the paintings and the objects the bedroom was totally redecorated under the

reign of the Savoy (from 1860) and the new bourgeois tone of their residences can clearly be seen here. The decorations from Torino covered the walls with a flower patterned fabric all the way to the ceiling giving a scenographic effect to the room. In the center of the ceiling a pre-existing fresco portrays a dancing female figure.

Apartment of the King Vittorio Emanuele II  
13 - Reception Room.

The fabric on the walls which was added during the reign of the Savoy covers the original neoclassical decoration done for Elisa Baciocchi. A part of this can be seen on the ceiling where only the coat of arms of the Savoy family was added. The neo-rococò furniture with black varnishing and heavy bronze decorations, of Piemontese origin, were sent down from the royal palace of Torino to the Villa in 1865. The four portraits on the walls: Ferdinando II, Vittoria della Rovere, Cosimo III and Maria Maddalena d'Austria.

#### 14-Bedroom.

Here again the neo-classical decorations of the walls was covered with fabric when in 1865, the room was prepared for the King. The room has a domestic tone to it, and responds to the style of a country residence, considered a place to stop and rest after the visit in the countryside or a hunting match.



*Vittorio Emanuele li 's Bedroom.*

Apartment (West side).

#### 15 - King Vittorio Emanuele's Camp Bedroom.

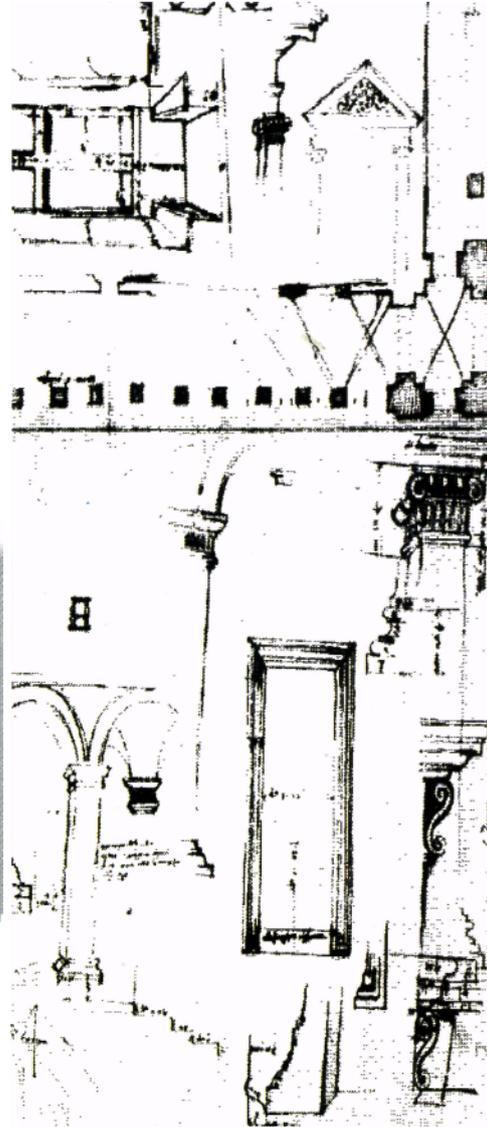
Since it was not possible to reassemble the original furnishings of this small room, the King's small camp bedroom is displayed here.

#### 16 - Parlour - Studio.

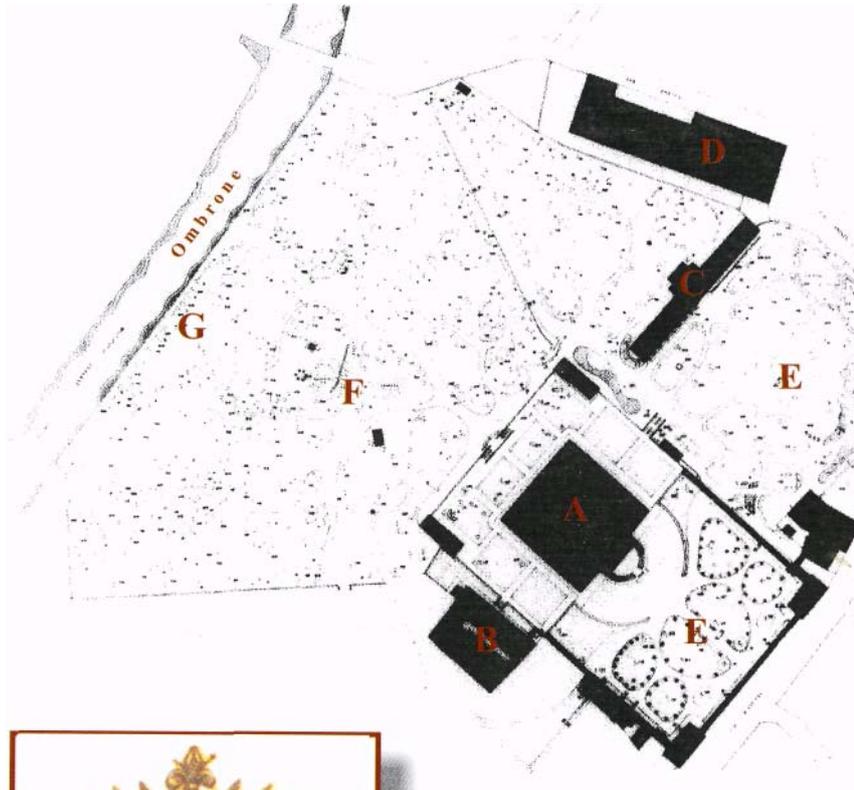
The fancy wallpaper was applied to the walls of this room during the Savoy period, while the furniture was brought here from The other royal palaces of Parma, Modena and Lucca.

#### 17 - Parlour, ex bedroom.

Originally a bedroom, this parlour is today furnished with inlaid pieces of the late 1700's from Emilia.



# PARK AND GARDEN



## LEGEND

- A Medici Villa
- B Kitchen
- C Lemon tree house
- D Ex Medici stables
- E Garden
- F Park
- G Ambra and Ombrone



*Justus Utens "Lunette depicting the Villa di Poggio a Caiano".*

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE VILLA, THE GARDEN AND THE PARK.

### The History.

The construction of the Villa of Poggio a Caiano started in 1485 and followed the purchase on behalf of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1473 of a large territory which surrounds the villa and includes the areas of Santa Maria in Bonistallo, Ponte a Tigliano and Tavola. Lorenzo wanted to create a large hunting area and a farm at the Cascine of Tavola based on a totally innovated view of farming. Giuliano da Sangallo carried out the project and on the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1492, the construction was merely started. In 1495 the basements, the ground portico and probably the facade were finished. When

Lorenzo's son Piero de' Medici was exiled from Florence the works were interrupted and resumed in 1512 when Lorenzo's wife Alfonsina Orsini returned to Florence and intensified in 1515 when Lorenzo's son Giovanni became Pope Leo X. His emblem, the yoke, is imprinted in the center of the ceiling of the main hall ( Hall of Leo X). It was only under Cosimo I that the garden and the four bulwarks were completed. Tribolo's

project was carried out after his death (1550) by his son-in-law

Davide Fortini. In 1562 Giorgio Vasari designed the entrance in Via Pratese and the staircase which is most probably the one in Bianca Capello's apartment. Between 1801 and 1811 Pasquale Poccianti designed and carried out the curved shaped front stairs which lead to the terrace on the front of the Villa and which substituted the original straight stairs designed by Sangallo.

He also designed the large internal staircase. The garden was designed by Tribolo on request of Cosimo I and was completed by Davide Fortini. Tribolo also designed the two bulwarks which protect the front entrance, the walls surrounding the Villa and the large building called the Scuderie (horse stables) on the east side of the Villa. The building called the palatio or Pallacorda is also attributed to him and can be seen on the rear side of the Villa. In 1552 the secret garden was planted. This could be reached by crossing a bridge and was separated from the main garden by a small road. The garden, as can be seen in the lunette of the Villa by Giusto Utens, (between 1599 and 1602) has a traditional cross shape, with four major and eight minor partitions. In the center a small wooded area was planted to obtain a nearby hunting ground right behind the Villa. The garden was transformed between 1811, when on the north side the new staircase was

added to the front of the Villa, and 1830 when the English style garden was created in the back with flower patches and curved paths. This was designed by Pasquale Poccianti who also designed the large building for citrus trees. The road which divided the Villa from the garden was eliminated thus uniting the two with the construction of a large staircase. Nothing remains of the 16th century garden except for the surrounding walls.

At the north end of the garden we find the large lemon tree house building, used to protect the many citrus plants during the Winter season. It was designed by Pasquale Poccianti. The Italian style garden today is divided in neatly trimmed patches of flowers and low bushes and a large number of citrus trees, especially lemon trees. Cedrus atlantica, Sequioia sempervirens, Sequioia dendron giganteum and a small collection of roses are the main types of plants we find in the garden. Behind the Villa the garden turns into an English style park with several openings and shady areas and different examples of oak trees such as the large Turkey Oak. There is also a small bamboo wooded area which creates a romantic little corner around the Small building called the ghiacciaia or freezer which was originally built in the Renaissance period and redone in the 1700's.

nd was used to preserve foods. The terracotta statues figuring Ambra and Ombrone and the fountain with the large uni. At the far end of the park, date back to the 1800's.

#### **The Cascina Hamlet.**

Beyond the Villa towards Prato a long extension of land was included in the purchase made by Lorenzo the Magnificent with the intention of setting up an innovated farm based on a modern view of agriculture for those times.

The construction of the main part of the Cascina hamlet started around 1477 as one can read in a letter from Antonio Marchetti dated April 28th 1477 and addressed to Lorenzo the Magnificent:

"Most Magnificent Lorenzo. This morning I went to Poggio and the masters who have to do some works came with me because I wanted them to design and dig the foundations for the Cascina"

The works were certainly completed by 1485; in the little sonnet "Ambra" written by Poliziano there is a wide description of the entire area, of the grounds and the irrigation, as well as a description of the embankments built to protect the land from the waters of the Ombrone River.

The most complete description of the Cascina is



*Medici Villa, Lemon tree house and garden.*

found in a letter written by Michele Verino to his friend Simone Colligiani (unfortunately without a date): The place is half way between Florence and Pistoia - North, a large plains extends towards the River and it's protected from floods , by a large dyke. It is so fertile due to the amount of water which irrigates the plains even in the Summer months that there are several harvests of hay in one season, but the soil is also fertilised every year otherwise it would lose its richness. In the center of the area there are some large buildings, with stone floors. These buildings are surrounded by high walls and a deep ditch, and they have four towers just like a castle. There is a large amount of cows, which produce great quantities of milk for cheese, sufficient for the needs of Florence and roundabouts, so that it is no longer necessary to get it, as before, from Lombardy. A detailed map by Giovannantonio Dosio was drawn up of the area at the beginning of the 1500's and shows a square shaped building with four towers on its corners, surrounded by a ditch; there is a wide internal courtyard with a portico, while the central part is occupied by a basin used for fish breeding. This was also an important activity here at the Cascine as one can read from Poliziano's description: rich fields where

irrigation is assured by the new embankments surrounded by canals full of fish...



*Medici Villa Park - "Ambra and Ombrone"*



*The Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano, flight view.*