

# LIBRARY “Popolare – L. Ricca”

## **The beginning of the library**

In the 1860 the neo-united Italy was inherited by a semi-illiterate population: at that time the public education wasn't an acquired right.

In Codogno, not so small considering that it counted almost 11.500 inhabitants, mainly to an agricultural nature but so active, lively and aware of the new school of thought, the liberal bourgeoisie figured out his own social task and some of the private citizens gathered to promote the public sphere and to spread education in classes who were less well-off.

This led to assume the birth of a library. In the first years of the activity the library promoted and incentivized the affluence of the citizens to convince them of reading and of instruction, that it can complement the scholastic's teaching. But the people for sure, didn't have the possibility of buying books.

## **The birth of the public library**

At this point the two authorities, the civil and the religious one, get involved.

The first one on the wave of the dissemination of scientific knowledge, the second one upholds the moral and the religious education.

In this way, two library are formed; the one called “circulating” of the Clergy, and the one “public” of the civil administration. The Codogno's library is first opened to the public the 14 november 1869 at the ex rooms of the superintendence and the reception hall of the Ognissanti college. It was a structure which was promoted by 40 associates, privates or entities, who had to contribute to the costs of the maintenance of the same through the purchase of the actions. The civil administration step up: establish and set up a committee to purchase new works and their management.

Professors and researchers donate Italian, French and English novels, and starts collecting manuals of the dissemination of scientific knowledge; and was made a subscription of two prestigious magazines: LA Revue des Deux Monde, and La Nuova Antologia, which combined scientific and commercial annual at the real mines of information and formation.

Codogno's library becomes one of the first public library in Italy and for long time also the biggest and the most provided (of all the public ones) in the province of Milan.

## **The bequest of Luigi Ricca and the fusion of the two libraries**

On February 2nd in 1878 there was a turning point: the advocate Luigi Ricca (founder of the Pia Workhouse) at the time of his death bound all of his belongings to the municipality on the testament.

It's about buildings, furnitures and five thousand volumes among whom stands out a collection of music both handwritten and also printed, for guitar and various instruments, of famous authors and also of the accounted brother Giuseppe Ricca, who was an excellent guitarist and a dabbler songwriter.

After some hesitation, the legacy is accepted, but held separately in legislation and economic level by the already existing public library.

Ricca's library took place in the house of his own propriety in Via Milano n.9 (Via Dante today).

Just on April 25th in 1898 the two libraries are combined in an institute which it will be called: "the Civica Popolare- Luigi Ricca".

Already in 1914 the library was one of the few to have its own residence of all the public ones of the province of Milan, and with its 16.417 volumes it results to be a library with a wide heritage of the Provincial Union.

The library stayed opened non-stop until the outbreak of the World War II: a period of which there are no documents so it is assumed a temporary closure of it.

In 1948 the municipal was forced to sell the stable inherited by Ricca and everything was settled in disposed classes of the Ognissanti and Zoncada's middle schools.

In 1954 the heritage of books rises to 21.300 and for the annual purchase for the volumes almost 200.000 of lire are spent.

The Sixties and the Seventies marked the period maybe the most troubled for the numerous transfers: the high schools close the rooms. There is an attempt to come accross a solution in town, a safe reference point: here's the Lamberti's hall, even if it doesn't offer big spaces, it is equipped by special shelvings to better use the heights of the premises. This place soon reveals itself unfit to contain the important bequest and for donations or purchases.

So it is resort to the ex miller in Via Pietrasanta. Having to provide the use of upper floor to the financial offices, the library has to be satisfied with the ground floor and the basement.

Meanwhile, by the new regional authorities, comes new directives for the classification and the collocation of the books imposed by the method of Dewey, who requires the use of numerous bookshelves who has to support the works divided in genres, and not longer based to the size of the same that economized the space used. The place of Via Pietrasanta becomes incapable to contain all the heritage, that increases more and more. Initially it was believed that the ex monastery of Clarisse (between via Verdi and via Mazzini) has going to replaces the structure, but studies reveal a worn-out structure and unsuitable to support the weight of the books. Meanwhile already in the 80's starts the digitalization of all the book heritage.

In february 1994 the place is transfered near the old hospital Soave in the current conference room, but the shifting of the library are not finished yet. With a regional financial all the west wing of the building is being restructured for a surface of 448 metres with also the basement.

Finally on october 10th in 1998 (the year that recurs the centenary of the fusion between the public library and the Luigi Ricca's library), here's the new and the current place (that it will need further expansion, maybe using the basement): a final installation which marks a military stone in the history of Codogno's culture.