

Just ten years, or a little more. That's how long the *della Porta* family owned Palazzo Podocataro, purchased through a deed drawn up by notary Cecchulus Hieronimus de Tarano on April 27, 1565, finalized by notary of the *Auditor Camerae* Antonius Guidottus on March 22, 1573, and sold to tenant Monsignor Giustiniano Orfini a couple of years later.

The declared intention of the brothers Costanzo, Ardicino, and Francesco della Porta was to treat the purchase of Palazzo Podocataro purely as a real estate investment. Combined with the many legal constraints in the sales contract to protect the artistic assets within the property, this made the management and eventual sale of the palace difficult.

The wills of Ludovico, and later those of Livio and Cesare Podocataro, were all drafted in a way that safeguarded the prestigious collection of statues and hieroglyphs. Three important guarantors—Marquis Incoronati, Bishop Luigi Ardinghelli, and Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara—were appointed to oversee the collection, leaving the della Porta brothers little flexibility to alter anything. Consequently, they soon began thinking of selling the palace.

The *della Porta* family arrived in Rome in the 1400s, but its noble roots go back even further, with various branches appearing among the noble families of Northern Italy in the 1300s, particularly in Como, Udine, and Verona. In Rome, the first prominent figure was Cardinal Ardicino della Porta Seniore in 1426, followed in the ecclesiastical career by his nephew, Ardicino Juniore, who was also made a cardinal in 1489.

The Ardicino who guided his two brothers in the purchase and subsequent sale of Palazzo Podocataro was a great-nephew of Ardicino Juniore. In Rome, the *della Porta* family split into multiple branches, one of which, the *della Porta Rodiani Carrara*, maintained close ties with the *Alvarez de Castro* family from the beginning to the end of the 1800s due to their

shared membership in the *Corpo delle Guardie Nobili* (Noble Guard Corps) since its founding in 1801.

Each of the *della Porta* brothers lived in their own family palaces: Ardicino in Via dei Condotti, Costanzo in Via della Vite, and Francesco in Via di Santa Maria di Campo Marzio. Their real estate activity is well-documented, with numerous records of vineyard and palace sales in Rome and the *Castelli* area, including the 16th-century *Villa Fabbri* in Trevi, Umbria, which came into the family through marriage with a Countess Carrara of Terni. They also owned a large number of houses scattered throughout Rome, particularly in the *Tor de' Specchi* and *Catinari* areas, as well as an important palace in Albano, which they held until World War II. Another villa in Rome, with a large park on Via Salaria, was acquired through questionable dealings, denounced but unsuccessfully opposed by Count Ignazio della Porta Rodiani Carrara. His great-niece, architect Maria Antonietta Cester Toso, published a delightful diary curated by Liliana Cargnelutti, which reveals the small virtues of Roman nobility between 1893 and 1900.

Ignazio della Porta Rodiani Carrara's diary spares no one, openly criticizing even other *della Porta* family members with adjectives that hardly align with nobility, particularly nobility of spirit. The diary also indirectly hints that there may not have been unified intent among the three *della Porta* brothers who purchased Palazzo Podocataro. In fact, reading the notarial act, Francesco's absence is frequently noted, as well as Ardicino's clear dissent, as he requested and obtained significant changes during the drafting of the contract. Of the three, Ardicino likely had the most difficulty with the obligation to preserve the extensive Podocataro collection. He may have thought that by purchasing the palace "with gates closed," as was customary with agricultural estates, he could easily monetize the statues and marbles lovingly collected by Ludovico and Livio Podocataro.

It is likely that Monsignor Giustiniano Orfini, another important tenant of the *della Porta* family's new palace, made the right offer at the right time, becoming the third owner of Palazzo Podocataro. © RIPRODUZIONE RISERVATA

