



Ecomuseum association of industrial activities at Perosa Argentina and Chisone and Germanasca Valleys.

The Association was born on 4th May 1996, and it stemmed from a Committee involved in a project of a museum and an archive of the industrial activities at Perosa Argentina and Valleys. The Committee was founded in 1995 by a group of people with a common purpose: the desire of collecting, preserving and using all the heritage of industrial activities at Perosa Argentina (i.e. documents, material and evidences, mainly textile) so that it could be displayed and used by local people and by anyone who might have interest in this kind of topics

The coming museum

Chisone and Germanasca Valleys offer to the tourist not only beautiful natural resources such as green fields, shadowy woodlands, amazing landscapes with fresh rivers, but also the history, sport, and technology, thanks to the efforts made by both public and private structures during the last decade to offer a stimulating experience in the Valleys.

Suffice it to think of the Fenestrelle Fort (il Forte di Fenestrelle), about the testimonies of the ancient battles and Waldensian sites, about peasant life memories. However, it is also necessary to develop an itinerary about the history of industrial sites, showing the kind of socio-cultural and territorial transformations produced by the process of industrialisation. In this way, the touristic-package offered by the Valleys can become more complete. Although Prali with "Scoprìminiera" (discover the mines), and the Mountain Community of Chisone and Germanasca Valleys have valued the extractive sector, and although the "Museo del Cuscinetto" (balls bearing museum) has valued the metalmechanic sector, at Villar Perosa, we cannot forget the textile sector. The latter has been especially important for the low Chisone Valley, and in particular for Perosa Argentina, as the following story will explain.

Industrialisation began at Perosa Argentina, a territory in between Chisone and Germanasca Valleys, at the beginning of the second half of the last century, thanks to the particular geographic position and to two foreign families of entrepreneurs: the German Gutermann and the Swiss Abegg. They implanted respectively a silk and a cotton factory. Both of these factories implemented previous weaving factories, modifying their task and way of working. From this industrialising process, social and territorial transformations followed, displacing the old peasant life-style with the new working-class style of life. This new life-style modified the urban plan of the town, creating workers' houses, employees' houses, social activities and buildings such as kindergardens, sport fields, after-work activities, etc...All of these structures were necessary to guarantee an acceptable life condition to the workers, who since the 1890s did not anymore only come from the town and its bordering areas, but also from longer distances. As a consequence of their new permanent job, these people moved permanently in the Valleys, becoming resident and causing a demographic increase with following new houses and social structures. Today this buildings' heritage is abandoned and not in use. Some of it is now serving other needs, and it has undergone reductions and modifications. In particular, the two buildings for the houses of worker-women, the Gutermann's one, now property of the Turin Province, and the Abegg's one, now property of the Perosa Manufacture, are not used and severely damaged.

The Ecomuseum Association of Perosa Argentina intends to use again one of these buildings for public purposes: the creation of the museum, and it plans to involve in this project also other Associations and Institutions in order to get the fundings from Province, Region and European Union. The main aims of the Ecomuseum project are: the reuse of at least one side of the Gutermann work-women's houses, and the museum itself with an itinerary based on industrial archaeology, telling the history of the textile industry in the Valley. This last task will be centred on the technical evolution of textile laboration, from the origins to the present-day, emphasising

the social transformations occurred, which have slowly transformed a peasant population into a working one. From this last consideration, it follows that there is a culture of the industry which has its roots in the past, and which is heritage of everyone, hence deserving to be looked after and valued.

Be done

There have been many and various initiatives from the Association. There have been attempts to involve the population of Perosa and Pomaretto, then the Public bodies of the Turin Province, the Mountain Community of Chisone and Germanasca Valleys, Perosa Argentina and Pomaretto Councils, and finally there has been an attempt to involve the schools.

The results have been positive: the population is positive towards the Ecomuseum initiative, many are the members of the Association, many are the people willing to help as soon as the Ecomuseum will be open.

By the same token, schools are willing to participate to the various activities proposed by the Association, spreading the valorisation of the territorial resources among the young generations.

The public bodies are interested in the Ecomuseum as a means, together with others, to improve the conditions of the Valleys in the new millennium. So, the Perosa Argentina and Pomaretto City Council Administrations, and the Chisone and Germanasca Valleys Mountain Communities are going to contribute to the three aims of our Association:

- 1) the preparation of wall notices for the Ecomuseum open itinerary, in the town's streets, to the discovery of the transformations caused by textile factories. Thanks to the contribution of the Turin Province Cultural Body, this aim has been reached in March 2002.
- 2) the preparation of the provisional textile industry museum seat. This aim has been reached in June 2001, thanks to the contribution of Perosa Argentina City Council Administration and to the Turin Province Cultural Body.
- 3) the creation of the definite Museum seat, using the Gutermann Worker-women housing building. We hope to have positive news about this project during the 2002.

Visit option

Self-guided visit: individual visitors can follow the itinerary, looking at the indications of the brochure and reading the basic information on the explanatory panels. Visit lasts around one hour and a half and it is free.

Guided visit I: only for groups booked at least 48 hours ahead. The visit starts with an introduction at the Museum main site, where the history of Valley's industrialisation is explained with panels, material on display and audio-visual material. It follows the itinerary, with a stop in each of the nine main sites. The guide will offer exhaustive information in relation to the various highlighted aspects. Visit lasts around two hours and a half, the cost is of 3,00 Euro per person (the biggest size is of 25 people, group-guides included).

Guided visit II : Only for groups booked at least one week ahead. This visit is like that one above described, moreover it includes a visit to the anti-aircraft shelters under the workers' houses in Roma Street. There are also sound effects which make you experience the reality of daily life during the war period. Visit lasts around three hours. The cost is 3,50 Euro per person (maximum group size: 25 people, group-guides included).

Visit to the head building of the Museum: only for groups booked at least 48 hours ahead. Visit lasts one hour. Cost is 2,50 Euro. Maximum group size: 25 people, group-guides included.

Individual visitors can visit the main site of the museum on Saturday, from 3:00 pm until 6:00 pm. The entry ticket cost is 1 Euro.

Free entry for members : one year card costs 8 Euro.

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