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From the Grand Tour to the Grand Hotel: the Birth of the Hospitality Industry in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany between the 17th and the 19th Century

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to investigate the architecture of different types of accommodations in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany between the 17th and the early 19th centuries. Buildings used as paid accommodation facilities such as inns, hotels, and guest houses, had peculiar architectural features: they were utilitarian buildings that reflected the taste of their time and the customs and rituals related to travel. This work proposes an analysis of the architectural properties of those accommodation facilities, alongside their environmental and historical context and the transformations they have undergone in time. With this aim, we look at the development of particularly two types of accommodations that are representative for Tuscany. The coaching inns, public accommodation for travellers that often replaced earlier medieval inns, and the city hotels, usually opened inside ancient, privately-owned palaces where rooms were converted to accommodate visitors.

Keywords: Grand Tour; Grand Duchy of Tuscany; Accommodation; Coaching Inn; Hotel

Volontà di questo articolo è indagare sull'architettura dei diversi tipi di alloggiamento presenti nel Granducato di Toscana tra il XVII e l'inizio del XIX secolo. Le strutture destinate all'accoglienza a pagamento, quali locande, osterie e alberghi hanno caratteristiche architettoniche peculiari: esse sono edifici utilitaristici che riflettono il gusto del loro tempo e le abitudini e i rituali legati al viaggio. Questo lavoro propone un'analisi delle proprietà architettoniche di alcune di queste strutture, ponendo l'attenzione al contesto ambientale e storico-sociale nel quale sono sorte e alle trasformazioni che hanno subito nel corso dei secoli. Con questo proposito, verranno

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analizzati due tipi di strutture per l'alloggiamento particolarmente rappresentativi della Toscana: le stazioni di posta, edifici pubblici situati in punti strategici delle vie di comunicazione granducali che spesso presero il posto di antiche locande medievali- e gli alberghi urbani, generalmente aperti all'interno di antichi palazzi di proprietà privata, dove le camere furono trasformate per ospitare viaggiatori con tutte le migliori comodità.

Keywords: Grand Tour; Granducato di Toscana; Alloggiamento; Locanda; Albergo

Introduction

With the aim to identify different building types, this work surveys the architecture of accommodation in Tuscany from the 17th to the first half of the 19th century. During this period significant changes in taste and needs of travellers have occurred, and are reflected in Grand Tour travel literature¹. In travel accounts, reports on the accommodations (inns, hotels) are usually not a main subject, as the private aspects of the journey are often pushed into the background and special attention is paid, instead, to the description of places, monuments and lists of works of art.² Nevertheless, when these descriptions are included they provide useful insight, as accommodation represented a recurring issue to deal with for those who travelled and, at the same time, provided tourists with the opportunity to highlight the differences between the lifestyle of their own country and the other countries they were going to visit. The many - and usually negative - comments about early Italian travel facilities in Grand Tour literature reveal also, as suggested by Jeremy Black (1997), the travellers' tendency to prefer long stays in the main cities and short stopovers in those places where inns and hotels were barely acceptable. This paper tries to understand how the architecture of accommodation facilities developed during the centuries of the *Grand Tour* in response to an increasingly wider and more demanding crowd of travellers. The buildings used for short stays situated along the Tuscan roads will be analysed initially, followed by a study of city hotel architecture regarded as a transformation of the architectural model of private noble palaces.

This research started in 2013 with a study of the Tuscan territory and of its most important roads followed by travellers between 17th and the early 19th centuries; firstly I read a lot of travel journals and their comments on inns and hotels. Later I studied the most famous structures through the archives documents. This paper is the summary of a more extensive research done by the author for her PhD dissertation.

1. Accommodation on the Roads of the Grand Duchy³ between the 17th and the 19th Century

When in the 16th century the fashion of the educational journey began to spread, the presence of numerous inns already characterized all major roads of Europe. Nevertheless, reading travellers' diaries and notes published between the 16th and the

17th century it is possible to infer that very little progress had been made since the Middle Ages to improve the quality of lodgings. The first regional differences seem to emerge in this period, but it is difficult to assess to what extent the perception of different quality levels was real or due to stereotypes of the time from which our travellers were not immune (see Maczak 1992 for more on this topic). Along the itineraries of the Grand Tour, the traveller could find shelter in private inns, public coaching inns, or taverns. In Europe, from approximately the mid-17th century, the coaching inn, sometimes called 'coaching house' or 'staging inn', was a vital part of the inland transport infrastructure, as an inn serving coach travellers (for more on this topic, see: Gallop 2003, Richardson 1948, Pevsner 1976, Denby 1998: 17-23). Coaching inns stabled teams of horses for stagecoaches and mail coaches and replaced tired teams with fresh teams. Some towns in Tuscany had as many as ten such inns and rivalry between them was intense, not only for the income from the stagecoach operators but for the revenue for food and drink supplied to the wealthy passengers. The quality of the services offered by these facilities was a basic one: they were considered as short stopovers placed along fixed courses leading to cities and towns, where it was possible to find more spacious and comfortable accommodation (hotels, guest-houses or furnished apartments). Anyway, starting from the end of the 16th century, the accommodation offer in Europe and Tuscany in particular, turned gradually (along the most beaten paths, at least) in a simple but functional system: since travelling for education or leisure was an opportunity for the chosen few, buildings used as paid accommodation facilities slowly conformed to the demand of those who, for lifestyle and sense of belonging, were part of a high social class (Battilani 2001).

In 1580 Michel de Montaigne arrived in Tuscany attracted by the curative properties of thermal water of Bagni di Lucca, in order to heal his painful kidney stones:⁴ in his diary he accurately describes the Italian hospitality industry which was then mostly composed of pubs, inns and furnished apartments of poor quality. Nonetheless, he found excellent accommodation in Tuscany, precisely in Levanella, near Arezzo, which he compared to the best French hotels:

The inn [of Levanella] is around one mile before the village and is famous; they regard it as the best inn in Tuscany and they are right; indeed, bearing in mind the level of inns in Italy, it is one of the best. It is a place of great revelry and they say that the local nobility meets here often, just as it does at the 'Moro' in Paris or at Guillot in Amiens. They serve food on tin plates, which is certainly a rarity (Montaigne 1983: 110).

A first iconographic representation of Tuscan accommodation structures coincides with the arrival of Michel de Montaigne: between 1580 and 1595 the administration of the Grand Duchy of Florence drew a series of geographical maps, called *Piante di Popoli e Strade dei Capitani di Parte Guelfa* which gives the first iconographic depiction of special buildings called *osterie* [pubs or inns]: considering just the Florence area, we find more than 40 inns located close to important streets and crossroads.⁵ These maps allow a first consideration about the distribution and the typology of the inns along the main roads of the Grand Duchy. Many of these buildings are located on the *Via Romana*, the most popular route with travellers, merchants and pilgrims since the

Middle Ages: on this route there are *Osteria del Galluzzo* (**Figure 1**), *Osteria Montebuoni*, *Osteria della Fonte a Petroio*, the two inns of *Sambuca* (**Figure 2**), the inn of *Montecorfoli*, *Osteria del Bargino*, the inn of *Poppiano*, called *Romana Osteria*, and the inn of *Querciola di Staggia*. The appearance of the inns over this road (painted in red to indicate the primary role in the hierarchy of the road network in the Grand Duchy) is imposing and easily recognizable: as in the rest of the Italian and European territory, they are characterized by the presence of signboards and large porches for horses and coaches. The inn itself is usually a simple building, mostly hybrid in terms of function, without social-class distinction: it was often accompanied by workshops, such as the blacksmith, the farrier and the butcher that sometimes occupied the same building of the inn. These workshops are represented in the maps with the typical opening in the shape of a 'T' (**Figure 3**).



Figure 1: Osteria del Galluzzo, detail of *Piante di Popoli e Strade redatte dai Capitani di Parte Guelfa (1580-1595)*.

Source: Reprinted from Pansini, G. (1989). *Piante di Popoli e Strade; Capitani di Parte Guelfa 1580-1595*. Vol. 2. Firenze: Olschki, map number 651.

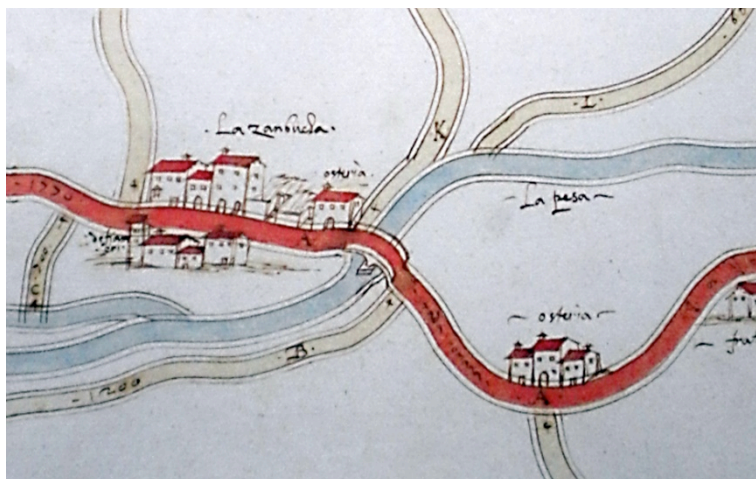


Figure 2: Detail of the two osterie [inns] on the Romana road in town of Sambuca.

Source: Reprinted from Pansini, G. (1989). *Piante di Popoli e Strade; Capitani di Parte Guelfa 1580-1595*. Vol.1. Firenze: Olschki, map number 178.



Figure 3: Osteria del Camicia. The presence of a shop is signalled by the typical opening in the shape of a 'T'.

Source: Detail reprinted from Pansini, G. (1989). *Piante di Popoli e Strade; Capitani di Parte Guelfa 1580-1595*. Vol. 1. Firenze: Olschki, map number 106.

While inns were spreading across the territory, the state-organized coaching inn system started to be developed. The *Sovrintendenza Generale delle Poste* [General Superintendency of Posts] was established in 1607 in Tuscany (Cantini 1802: Vol. VI), but a new settlement of the system of coaching inns was made by the House of Habsburg Lorena government in the mid-18th century. The first real postal law was published on March 14, 1746⁶ and the legislation was reorganized by Francesco Stefano di Lorena in 1762; in 1783 the ownership and management of the mail system passed to the *Dipartimento Generale delle Poste* [General Department of Posts] (Scarso 1996). The progressive revolution of the roads prepared in Tuscany by Lorraine government involved the improvement of services related to the transport of persons, goods and mail with the system of coaching inns.

Travelling along the *stazioni di posta* [coaching inns] was a widespread practice in the *Grand Tour* and by the mid-18th century several handbooks and travel papers were published, containing maps with routes, information on places where horses could be changed and notes about the hardest places to pass through along the journey. The progressive 'road revolution' prepared by the Lorraine government in Tuscany improved services related to the transport of people, goods and correspondence through the use of *poste-cavalli* [coaching inns] that were open, since the 16th century, along the major transit routes, called *strade postali* [postal-roads]. These buildings were strictly controlled by the state apparatus that used them in support of its couriers; the service consisted in installing, at regular distances, posts managed by *postieri* [postmasters] for the replacement of horses, in addition to being a place of accommodation for travellers.

From an architectural viewpoint, we have identified two stages in the development of Tuscan coaching inns: at first they were located inside old inns, while later on new buildings were developed along with a road improvement policy set up by the government.

On the roads of Tuscany, the coaching inns were initially placed in buildings that already absolved a receptive function: this was the case with the post stations of

Montecarelli in the Apennine area⁷ (Figures 4-5), *Levane*, in the area of Chianti,⁸ *Ricorsi* in Senese.⁹ They were public buildings functional to the needs of reception on the road and they respected basic standards as, for example, the visibility from a distance and the façade with a sign: the identification of the building through the exhibition of the Grand Ducal signs was to be considered as a protection for travellers. As regards architecture typology, they did not differ greatly from each other and they could also be in the form of simple stables or barns. The huge yard of the post house was a teeming world in miniature onto which faced, along with the inn, the stables, the farrier's workshop, the ticket office, the baggage room and the coach houses. The structure of the premises, initially a single room used for both board and lodging, rendered them smoky and dirty and condemned the guests to promiscuity (Brilli 2015). Furnishings were minimal: travellers grumbled about windows with no glass in rooms without fireplaces, doors without locks, bed linen that was dirty but sprinkled with water (and therefore damp) to give the impression that it was fresh from the washhouse, precarious sanitary conditions in general and the absence of lavatories. The more widespread architectural model, with local variations, was that of a simple and compact building, provided with the necessary annexes and built on two or more floors. In fact, all coaching inns of Tuscany show a distribution on several floors, with a specialization of the internal features progressively taking place between the 17th and 18th centuries.

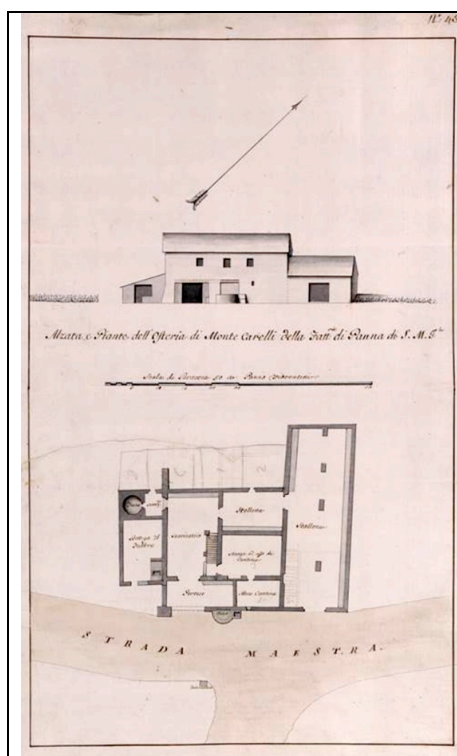


Figure 4: Elevation and plan of Osteria di Monte Carelli in Fattoria di Panna (1743).

Source: Image courtesy of: ASFI, *Piante dello Scrittoio delle Regie Possessioni*, Tomo IV, Disegni segnati col numero 43.

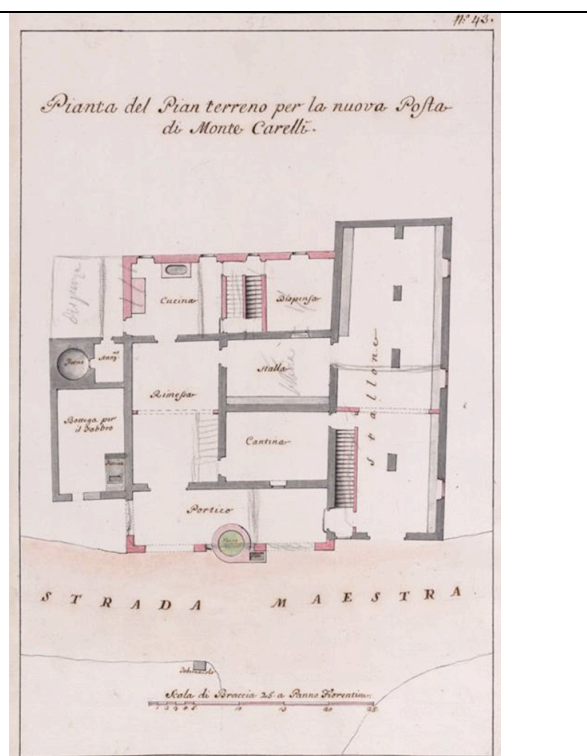


Figure 5: Plan of the ground floor for the new coaching inn of Monte Carelli (1765).

Source: Image courtesy of: ASFI, *Piante dello Scrittoio delle Regie Possessioni*, tomo IV, Disegni segnati col numero 43.

In the second phase of the development of coaching inns, in conjunction with a policy of expansion and improvement of the road network promoted by the government of Peter Leopold, new stations were built: these purposely built structures provided greater attention to social distinction and privacy of travellers, with private apartments, improvement of services and of comfort in general.

This is well observed in the station with customs of *Boscolungo*, designed and realized around 1780 by Bernardo Fallani, the architect of *Scrittoio delle Regie Fabbriche Granducali* [Office of the Grand Ducal Royal Factories], and still today almost intact in structure and function (**Figures 6-7**). The organization of this complex coaching inn with customs consists of two separate blocks facing the street. The distribution of the premises is functional: porches with stables, cellars and kitchens on the ground floor, living rooms, bedrooms and *luoghi comodi* [toilets] for guests upstairs. The block placed north of the street housed spaces used for the journey and replacement of horses: on the ground floor, there were separate barns and stables for the inn and the post, the storehouses, the tack room, a wash house, the shed and a drinking trough. Next to the stable for post, the rectory led directly to the new church of St. Leopold. On the first level of this block there were kitchens and bedrooms for postilions, a room for fodder and barns; on the second and last floor there were more barns and two bedrooms for postilions, one of which equipped with a fireplace. The building placed south of the street housed the inn, the post and customs offices: this structure consisted of four levels, with a stable, a room for wood, a cellar and a roost at its basement. On the ground floor a large porch gave access to the customs, while a large staircase with two flights allowed the access to the entrance hall of the inn, aligned with two lounges with a fireplace where it was possible to enjoy a hot meal; the pantry and the kitchen were located behind these areas. Two lounges were on the first level, one of which with a fireplace, along with four bedrooms (one of which with fireplace too) and the toilets; accessible garrets were on the second floor. Far from being an exception, this complex arrangement of functions within a small but well-designed compound of buildings is similar to that of other coaching inns built on the new Pistoiese-Modenese Road and located in Le Piastre, Piano Asinatico e San Marcello (for drawings and documents see ASFI, *Segreteria di Finanze. Affari prima del 1788*, n. 496). It can be thus said that the new coaching inns built by the government of Lorraine since the mid-18th century were innovative buildings: bigger, more organized than older facilities, with greater rationalization of space, they represent the ultimate in efficiency of Tuscan on-the-road hospitality well into the 19th century.



Figure 6: Plans of coaching inn of Boscolungo (1792).

Source: Image courtesy of: ASFI, *Piante miscellanea*, M. 12, 292 BIS.



Figure 7: The old coaching inn of Boscolungo transformed into a modern hotel called "Abetone e Piramidi".

Source: Photo by the author of the paper.

2. Urban Hospitality in Florence (17th- 19th Century)

The history of hospitality in the major cities of Tuscany has its roots in the Middle Ages: since the 13th-14th centuries, the towns of Florence, Siena, Pisa were provided with paid accommodation facilities, privately managed, created to host merchants, travellers and pilgrims. The *hotelier* profession, as well as the hotel itself, gradually specialized over the centuries covered by our study in conformity to tastes, needs and interests of the travellers. A preliminary analysis of some Tuscan cities (Florence, Pisa, Livorno), between the 16th and 17th centuries suggests that most urban accommodation facilities opened inside existing dwellings and thus were not purposely built: these generally simple inns, or *locande*¹⁰, at first intended as basic accommodation facilities, later turned into modern *hotels* when the need for comfort of guests overlapped the need for functional spaces. In fact, present research (Gerbardo 2006: 27-76; Brilli 2014: 147-166) suggests that it may be pointless to try to identify a unique architectonic model for early urban accommodation structures in the Tuscan Grand Duchy, due to the almost total identification of these buildings with private dwellings.

During the 18th century, however, the emergence of a travelling élite that valued 'exclusive' taste as a means to social distinction led to a general transformation of accommodation. A specific interest emerged for privacy and comfort, at least in rooms for eminent guests, and for the representational qualities of the accommodation facilities themselves, leading to the opening of living rooms, cafés and other meeting spaces.¹¹ The use of the word *hotel* to refer to accommodation facilities for travellers also came in use in the English language during this period (Pevsner 1976). The term *hotel* was thus beginning to indicate a whole series of transformations related to the structures used for reception. By the first decades of the 19th century, a further diversification

had taken place: some hotels had begun to target the most distinguished and wealthy visitors, providing rooms with fine furnishings, living rooms and coffee rooms for conversation; others, such as boarding houses or smaller hotels (Battilani 2001), were designed for 'middle class' travellers.

In general, throughout this whole period accommodation in Tuscan cities was to be found inside palaces located in the strategic points of the old town centre, close to the main places of interest. This applies both to Florence, the capital of the Grand Duchy, and to smaller towns such as Siena, where the area chosen for accommodation was located near Piazza del Campo,¹² or Lucca, where hotels were all located within the city walls.¹³ We can affirm that the progressive transformation from inn to grand hotel took place in the Grand Duchy very late if compared with other major European countries such as France and England and other popular destinations in Italy such as Venice, Rome and Naples.¹⁴ In Tuscany, we don't find a new urban architecture, purposely built for reception, before the late 18th century: the majesty of the ancient palaces adjusted to fit with the hotel functionalities had been up to then sufficient to meet the needs of more and more eclectic travellers and their tastes.

The fragmented nature of the documents related to the early modern period does not allow to draw a precise picture on the concentration and quality of accommodation facilities in the cities of the Grand Duchy up to the 17th century. At the State Archives of Florence, the collection of registers of the *University of Linaioli* includes papers pertaining to the *Arte degli Albergatori* [Guild of hoteliers], which was established in Florence in 1324 (Sartini 1953: 175-250, 257-322).¹⁵ By analysing the registration books in the collection, it has been possible to understand the complex variety of accommodation facilities in the city from the first half of the 17th century. The documents provide information about the names of all members of the *Arte degli Albergatori* and the prices they had to pay to be considered as part of the guild (**Figure 8**). By reading the registration lists, we have thus obtained a series of names of professionals and accommodation facilities: while they are not precisely positioned topographically, it is nevertheless possible to make some considerations about their distribution within the city during the 17th century. The first registration book, starting in 1635, informs us about the presence of twenty-four hoteliers in the city, including five women. The areas with a higher concentration of hotels were those of Borgo San Lorenzo and Santa Maria Maggiore. Since 1650, accommodation facilities in the city increased; the registration book of this year mentions forty hoteliers, including seven women. The city improved its accommodation capacity through new areas dedicated to hospitality, such as those of Borgo Ognissanti and Piazza del Grano. These precious sources do not provide data on the type of accommodation facilities or on their internal distribution; they are, however, useful in many ways, including the identification of some particularly long-lasting hotels and inns, such as the hotels *del Sole*, *della Palla*, *della Campana*, *del Centauro*, *della Rondine*, *del Falcone*, (ASFI, *Università dei Linaioli*, 159, Libro degli Albergatori segnato A) all mentioned in 1635, and continuously present in the city well into the following century.



Figure 8: Arms of the Arte degli Albergatori.

Source: Image courtesy of: ASFI, *Università dei Linaioli*, Arte degli Albergatori.

The late 18th century is also the period of the appearance of a new source, closely associated with the development of modern travel: the guidebook. Guidebooks gradually started not only to provide tourists with historic and artistic information, but also to analyse the quality of lodgings. Boccolari's guide (1784) puts this information at the beginning of the description of each city: in Florence, we read:

the best inns are that of Mr. *Vannini*, with apartments following the fashion of Paris, that of Monsieur *Meghit* in Fondachi di S.Spirito, formerly property of Monsieur Carle, the *Locanda della Rossa* and companions opposite to the Porta di S. Pancrazio, which provides lunch and round table (Boccolari 1784: 156).

The most complete guide about hospitality services in Florence in the first half of 19th century is that of Fantozzi (1842): 22 hotels are mentioned, most of them housed in former private palaces, as we can see in this table.

<i>Palazzo Ricasoli</i>	district of Santa Trinita	<i>Grand Hotel de New York</i> ¹⁶ (Figure 9)
<i>Palazzo Spini Feroni</i>		<i>Hotel d'Europe</i> (Figure 10) ¹⁷ ;
<i>Palazzo Bartolini Salimbeni</i>		<i>Hotel du Nord</i> in 1839 (Figure 11)
<i>Palazzo Minerbetti</i>	Via Tornabuoni	<i>Albergo del Pellicano</i> ¹⁸ , also known as <i>Locanda delle Armi d'Inghilterra</i>
<i>Palazzo Acciaiuoli</i>	Borgo Santi Apostoli	<i>Hotel Reale dell'Arno</i> ¹⁹
two palaces connected by a bridge	<i>Chiasso Del Bene</i> , which links Borgo Santi Apostoli to Lungarno Acciaiuoli	<i>Hotel di Gran Bretagna</i>
<i>Palazzo Capponi</i>	Oltrarno, on Lungarno Guicciardini	at first known as hotel <i>Royal de la Toscane</i> , hereinafter referred to as

		Hotel <i>des Iles britanniques</i>
Palazzo <i>Schneiderff</i>	Piazza Soderini (now Sauro)	<i>Schneiderff</i> hotel ²⁰
Palazzo Medici	Lungarno Guicciardini	Hotel <i>d'Inghilterra</i>



Figure 9: Palazzo Ricasoli, in the district of Santa Trinita, known as Grand Hotel de New York (second half of XIX century).

Source: Reprinted From Pucci, E. (1969). *Com'era Firenze 100 anni fa*. Firenze: Bonechi, p. 57.



Figure 10: Letterhead of *Hotel d'Europe à Florence tenu par D. Schobinger*, 1838.

Source: Image courtesy of: ASCF, Archivio fotografico.



Figure 11: *Palazzo* Bartolini Salimbeni, converted into the *Hotel du Nord* in 1839.
Source: Reprinted from Pucci, E. (1969). *Com'era Firenze 100 anni fa*. Firenze: Bonechi, p. 64.

The prestige of these facilities was such that J. G. Lemaistre, visiting Italy after the Peace of Amiens (1806), considered that in Florence “people could find better accommodation than any other country in the continent” (Lemaistre 1806: 433). Indeed, the good reputation of services provided in the growing number of florentine hotels installed in the early modern residential *palazzi* contributed in making the Tuscan city a coveted destination, not only for scholars or art lovers but also for those who wished to heal from diseases such as tuberculosis or ‘consumption’. English and American travellers in Florence chose their dwelling with special attention: whether it was a room ‘with a view’ (Forster 1908) or a rented apartment²¹, they especially targeted, among the available facilities, the ancient palaces, refitted almost exclusively for them with all modern amenities and often managed by their compatriots.

We have had the possibility to analyze one of such transformations. The *Palazzo* Bartolini Salimbeni functioned as home of the Salimbeni family until the first half of the 19th century²². In 1839, a part of the building was leased to foreign spouses Francesco Ponnson e Adelaide Herbeln: they transformed it in a hotel under the name of *Hotel du Nord*. The plans of the distribution of the premises attached to the appraisal delivered by engineer Cianferoni in 1858-60 allow us to understand how the building was adapted to its new function²³. The conversion of the building into a hotel involved relevant changes in its interior distribution: the main entrance, overlooking Piazza S. Trinita, gave access to a vestibule, which opened on to a large central hall; on the ground floor there were also a large dining room and a series of other spaces which were used as bedrooms, cloakrooms, shops, cafés, lounges. The magnificent grand

the services they offered as a result of the growing numbers and evolving needs of travellers. The coaching inns, which were an essential infrastructure for horse-drawn transportation, lost their significance after the middle of the 19th century and following the rise of railways: some of these buildings were then converted into taverns, while in the majority of cases (especially in southern Tuscany) they were simply reused as small farms or private houses.

On the other hand, urban hotel facilities specialised only from the end of the 18th century, tending gradually to differentiate accommodation services and to adapt them for a specific class of traveller, for whom the Renaissance palace represented an ideal of good taste and 'noble' living. The Grand-Hotels developing in Florence during the first decades of the 19th century inherited their large halls and reception rooms from existing urban palaces and turned them into "public" areas, separated from private ones hosting the bedrooms and apartments. We have seen that this conversion of dwellings into accommodation facilities could take place with little alteration of the building exterior. Often, in the changes of ownership followed the decadence of the Medici and Lorraine governments, the palaces were bought by foreigners. The new owners then restored these old houses in an imaginary 'Florentine' style, with discreet additions, reconstructions and embellishments linked to modern, and English, taste.

The author's point of view is that of an architectural historian, so the research is limited in reference to its urban-architectural context and deserves a broader view from the social and cultural point of view. The study was limited to the analysis of some cases of the Tuscan territory, but needs more detailed comparisons with other Italian areas, as already proposed by the studies of De Seta and Brilli. This research has encountered many difficulties in finding archival documents related to urban hotels because their stories are intertwined with the private events of the families who lived in this buildings: this phenomenon occurs only in Italy, while in other European countries are built appropriate buildings used as a Grand Hotel.

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Almatourism N. 17, 2018: Susini F., From the Grand Tour to the Grand Hotel: the Birth of the Hospitality Industry in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany between the 17th and the 19th Century

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¹ The Grand Tour was the traditional trip of Europe undertaken by mainly upper-class European young men of means, or those of more humble origin who could find a sponsor. This custom flourished from about 1660 until the advent of large-scale rail transport in the 1840s. Primarily associated with the British nobility, it served as an educational rite of passage; the primary value of the Grand Tour lay in the exposure both to the cultural legacy of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, and to the aristocratic and fashionably polite society of the European continent.

² Starting from the pioneering work by D'Ancona (1889), many and diverse studies have been carried out on the *Grand Tour*: For more on this topic, see: Brillì 2015, Brillì 2014, De Seta 2014, De Seta 1992, Gerbaldo 2009. This paper is the summary of a more extensive research done by the author for her PhD dissertation.

³ Nominally a state of the Holy Roman Empire until the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany was ruled by the House of Medici until the extinction of its senior branch in 1737. Francis Stephen of Lorraine, a cognatic descendant of the Medici, succeeded the family: his descendants ruled, and resided in the Grand Duchy until 1859 barring one interruption (1801-1814), when Napoleon Bonaparte gave Tuscany to the House of Bourbon-Parma.

⁴ M. E. De Montaigne (1533-1592) from 1580 to 1581 travelled through France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy and established himself at Bagni di Lucca where he took the waters. He is traditionally regarded as a precursor of the fashion for travelling in Italy and of the Grand Tour. He kept a journal in which he recorded regional differences and customs and a variety of personal episodes: Montaigne 1983.

⁵ Pansini 1989 (*Plans of Peoples and Roads of the Captains of the Guelph Party*). The plans are appreciable for their topographical and cadastral interest; they report – with a perspective- and view-based language that is typical of Renaissance cartography – iconographies specific to each building type (such as workshops, tabernacles, churches), at times providing more specific details on their architecture and size.

⁶ The law was regulated by a decree of 16 June 1746: *Regolamento universale da osservarsi da' corrieri, procacci, postieri, vetturini ec.*

⁷ An old inn was converted for the station of Montecarelli, approved on 1 April 1752, as reported in the State Archives of Florence (ASFI), *Segreteria di Finanze. Affari prima del 1788, n. 647. Dipartimento Generale delle Poste: Direzione di Firenze, Poste in luoghi subalterni*, file Montecarelli.

⁸ ASFI, *Segreteria di Finanze. Affari prima del 1788, n. 646. Dipartimento Generale delle Poste: Direzione di Firenze, Poste in luoghi subalterni*, file Levane: «L'edificio postale di Levane congiuntamente all'osteria e chiesa annessavi furono in origine una proprietà dello scrittoio delle Regie Possessioni e formarono parte della reale fattoria di Levane il di cui affittuario ritirava le pigioni dipendenti dal fabbricato della posta e dell'osteria. Piacque in seguito a Sua Altezza Reale di approvare che l'edifizio inserviente alla posta ed osteria passasse in proprietà del Dipartimento Generale delle Poste nel 17 maggio 1783».

⁹ ASFI, *Segreteria di Finanze. Affari prima del 1788, n. 648*. In the town of Ricorsi at least one inn existed since the late middle-ages and it was in that inn that the post-station opened on the 30 of June 1716, following the supplications and petitions by Ottavio Bandinelli, gentleman from Siena, whose lineage gave him the use of the said inn.

¹⁰ The Italian term *locanda* [inn] derives from the Latin *locare* which means lease, rent.

¹¹ N. Pevsner (1976:169) notes that the difference between a hotel and an inn is both a matter of size, and of presence, in hotels, of public spaces and public rooms.

¹² The history of hospitality in Siena has its roots in the Middle Ages, when a good number inns and taverns were located both inside and outside the city walls (Tuliani 1994); since the late 16th century, travellers' accounts usually praised the excellent hospitality and services received in this city (Brilli 1986).

¹³ Hotels and inns in Lucca were mainly situated along Via Fillungo and in the area between Piazza San Michele and Piazza Grande; the following inns are mentioned in 18th century documents: *della Luna, del Moro e del Biancone*. The tavern and inn *della Campana*, located in the square with the same name and already mentioned in 16th century documents, was particularly well-known: in its courtyard (then called Piazza *della Posta*) the stagecoaches of the postal service arrived and departed (Boccolari 1784).

¹⁴ See Denby 1998; Fraenkel and Iunius 2008; Gerbaldo 2009; Gerbaldo 2006; Gerbaldo 2014; Zaniboni 1921.

¹⁵ The fund of Hoteliers in ASFI includes four codes of statutes: statutes dated 1324 and 1334 in Latin, a 1338 statute in vernacular and Latin which was updated until 1509; and one last code, probably belonging to the same period, completely in vernacular. *Matricole* books are also available, thanks to which an extensive overview of the accommodation in the city is provided, with facilities attested from 1639 to 1713.

¹⁶ Historical Archive of the Municipality of Florence (ASCF), n. 1191, *Stime Restorini* 1783, c. 8; estimates made by the magistrate state that in the palace of Giovanni Ricasoli Zanchini at *Ponte alla Carraia* (present-day Piazza Goldoni) "a part of the house" was used as a hotel and was known at that time as *English House*. Among its guests, was the writer Hester Lynch Thrale-Piozzi who held there a sort of literary academy between 1784 and 1786. During the following century, the building was occupied by the *Nuova York* hotel (also called *New York* hotel, *Grand Hotel de New York*), chosen mainly by

Americans visiting Florence (for example, the American poet William Cullen Bryant, who stayed at the hotel in 1858, meeting Nathaniel Hawthorne).

¹⁷ Among the Palace's guests: the Prince of Metternich (1838), the Grand Duke Alexander of Russia (1838), the Hungarian composer Franz Liszt (1838), and the American poet James Russell Lowell (1856). In 1838, the hotel was handed over to one of the Homberts' nephews and was greatly criticised by English travellers who were disappointed with the standard of the hotel management given the price paid (Jousiffe 1840: 44).

¹⁸ The Albergo del Pellicano is recommended as an "excellent inn run by Gasperini, where dinners are cooked and served better than in any other hotel" (Starke 1820: 81). In 1840, Captain Jousiffe praised the care and respectability that the manager, Mister Gasparini, continued to maintain for the facility. In the eyes of the English travellers, the innkeeper was also famous for his ability to repair and build carriages (Jousiffe 1840: 74).

¹⁹ The palace was purchased by the lawyer Raffaello Maldura, that changed into an inn. (ASCF, *Comunità di Firenze, Deliberazioni magistrali e consiliari*, 4 dicembre 1820-8 marzo 1821). The adaptation involving the opening of additional windows on the facades; in 1835 the building became the property of the aristocratic English collector W. Kennedy-Laurie and was converted into the luxury hotel.

²⁰ Antonio Schneiderff, probably native of Lorraine, bought the palace owned by Sir Balj Ottaviano de' Medici in 1802 in the district of Santo Spirito on Lungarno Guicciardini. Already in 1805 the building was used as an inn and it was gradually enlarged following the purchase of further nearby buildings. As a result of the investments made, the palace – called *Schneiderff Hotel* – became one of the most reputable Florentine hotels during the first half of the 1800s. It was chosen by very diverse foreign travellers; in 1819, Ducos *Itinéraire et souvenirs d'un voyage en Italie* was fascinated by the hotel because "travellers were assigned to servants who spoke their language and it was possible to rest on spotless beds and eat at a refined table". The *Description of a view of the city of Florence, of Robert Burford* (1830) introduced the Schneiderff as "a capacious and magnificent establishment, well provided with every comfort and luxury, at every season of the year, and at very moderated charges".

²¹ Travellers choosing to stay in an apartment preferred the historic districts of Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce and Oltrarno, where they preferably rented whole areas of palaces owned by the ancient Florentine aristocracy. These buildings with their grand and austere apartments could be rented seasonally at very low prices and "adjusted" with furnishings that, as for choices and tastes, inevitably reminded these Anglophone travellers of their homeland.

²² Palazzo Bartolini Salimbeni, the first palace in Florence built according to the 'Roman' Renaissance, was erected by the architect Baccio d'Agnolo between 27 February 1520 and May 1523. The Bartolini-Salimbeni family lived in the palace until the early 19th century. In 1839 it became the Hotel du Nord and in 1863 it was acquired by the Pio di Savoia princes and split between different owners. Restored in 1961, the palace is now a private property.

²³ Documentary and iconographic material now in the State Archives of Florence has been published by Bartolini Salimbeni (1978).