

Sites of Memory

The former Molino Excelsior (Excelsior mill) in San Marco neighbourhood is a significant example of industrial archaeology. The building has a plan dating back to the first decades of the 1900s and it presents Art Nouveau features, a wooden truss ceiling and tiles. The gristmill was founded in 1904 by Vincenzo Gervasi and was designed by the Italian-Swiss firm "Fratelli Buhler". The firm also provided the mechanical equipment made of cast iron, larch and steel, which is still visible inside the building together with original working tools. The mill is a town's symbol of the local landowning class, which was active until the 1860s, and it is now owned by the municipality of Valderice, therefore representing a link among past, present and future.

A marble bust of Sebastiano Bonfiglio stands in the square located opposite the church of San Marco. Born in San Marco in 1879, Bonfiglio grew up in a family of peasants, a self-taught intellectual and a socialist with high moral standards, he became mayor of Erice in 1920 and called for a relocation of municipal powers from Erice to San Marco, angering Erice's landowners and mafia who opposed his ideas. He was killed on 10 June 1922 on the road from Erice to Valderice. San Marco neighbourhood is the oldest settlement in the plain of Valderice. According to historians, it was already inhabited before the reform carried out by the Bourbons, proof of which is the existence of a road dating back to 1786 and linking the top of mount Erice and the clump of houses built around the seventeenth century church dedicated to St Mark. Reasons leading peasants to colonize such part of Erice's district include a fertile soil and an abundance of water, in particular, the presence in San Marco of one of the three old drinking troughs in the area. The construction of the trough below ground level dates back to 1871 and it was made possible also by the local dwellers who raised 150 Italian lire, a considerable amount of money for that time. Another drinking trough is located near the arch called 'del Cavaliere' (the Knight's arch) while a third one is located in Fico neighbourhood. At the time such trough was one with the biggest flow rate in the district and among the few sources of water supply for the community. It continues to provide drinking water to this day, and the restored stones of the old structure represent an example of local workers great expertise.