

## Pratola Peligna and The Peligna Valley

Pratola Peligna, with an actual population of more than 8000 inhabitants, is situated in the centre of Peligna Valley, on a pleasant hill. It is bathed by the rivers Sagittario, Rio and Valla.

The history of Pratola, that added the term "PELIGNA" in 1863, is identifiable with that of the Peligna zone where, since ancient time, has been home to highly civilized populations.

The first reports on Pratola, appears in records compiled in 998 AD (Libellum di Valva in loco Pratulea) which tell about "Alberto di Transarico di Valva who receives from Giovanni, Abbot of S. Vincent at the Volturno for 29 years, for 300 coins, land in Pratola."

The history of this Countryside is tied everlastingly to that of the Celestini, to whom it was given September 20, 1294 by Charles II D'Angio, after the pontifical coronation of Fra Pietro da Marone, who took the name of Celestino V.

This gift was confirmed by the successors of Charles II D'Angio and the "servitude" of Pratola, under Morrone Abbey, endured until February 13, 1807, the date of the suppression of the Celestini of S. Spirito di il Morrone by decree of Napoleon I.

Many are the dates to recollect in Pratola's history but we want give the visitors the chance to discover it by its own, during a pleasant stay in this enchanting little town.



Pratola Peligna is the seat of one of the most accredited annual conferences on Emigration (August-September). Other annual events are the Agricultural Fair and the Craftsmanship show (during the first days of May), and the feast of the Madonna della Liberta', the first Sunday of May. The latter attracts crowds from all over the region. Every Friday Pratola holds a characteristic weekly market.

Pratola has held illustrious representatives of the Abruzzese and Italian culture, like: ANTONIO DE NINO - born in Pratola Peligna June 15, 1833 and died in Sulmona March 1, 1907, devoted all his life to seek the archaeological treasures of Abruzzo, to disclose the ancient history, to make know the soul of its people. His fame spread well beyond his home land.

In Pratola there are important monuments:

- ⊙ SANTUARIO DELLA MADONNA DELLA LIBERTA': Built in 1500 through thankfulness of the people of Pratola toward la Madonna that had freed them from the plague, it has subsequently been improved and enlarged to reach its present majesty. The Shrine contains the miraculous picture of the Virgin, of valuable workmanship, and various artworks of Patini and of the Pratolano Amedeo Tedeschi:
- ⊙ CAPPELLA DELLE SETTE MARIA e DELLA PIETA: these Chapels date from 1540 and are National Monuments. In them one discovers a complex sculpture in terracotta of Spanish style and frescos, of notable value, of the Umbrian school:
- ⊙ CHIESA DI S. PIETRO CELESTINO: the oldest of Pratola, mother church until 1873, surely existing since the XV sec.
- ⊙ Also there are important Palaces: De Petris, old town hall and Colella: the nineteenth century fountains of Garibaldi plaza and Madonna della Liberta': and the Old Mill of the Celestini.

Pratola Peligna, together with all the little villages in the Peligna Valley is famous for its wines, exported worldwide.



**PELIGNA VALLEY – HISTORY AND WINE CULTURE**

Even if it is made up of a small area, Abruzzo is an important region when considered in terms of wine production. And the Peligna Valley is the birthplace of this production. Already in ancient times poets and writers wrote about the wines of Abruzzo, exalting it. Pliny the elder, an expert, considered the wines of Peligni to be excellent. In his *Naturalis Historia e Marziale* he considered them to be on the same level, in terms of quality and merit, to the wines of Tuscany. Ovid couldn't miss the opportunity to exalt his native land, underlining that the vineyard was the most widespread form of cultivation in the Peligna valley.

Legends flourished about the quality of the wines of Abruzzo, such as Hannibal's horses being cured of scabies after having been washed with large amounts of wine. From other written sources it is gathered that the wines of Abruzzo were exported to Rome and were served at patrician tables. As a result of the edict of Domitian, on the basis of which at least fifty percent of vineyards had to be destroyed in order to overcome the overproduction of wines in Italy, vine cultivation in Abruzzo underwent breakdown. It was then completely destroyed by the barbarian invasions.



The grapevine flourished again with the return to agriculture that came about with the rise and spread of monasticism. In the sixteenth century, the Dominican Father Serafino Razzi, prior of the convent of Penne from 1574 to 1576, spoke of the wines and vineyards of Abruzzi in his writings. And again, during the Renaissance, Andrea Bacci pointed out that the area around Aquila distinguished itself from the other areas of Abruzzo for its wine production. It produced so much wine that the wine cellars contained enormous casks, "each holding one hundred cadis or more," equal to three thousand nine hundred or more litres.

The few wines that have so far been recognised as DOC are, however, greatly appreciated and are typical of the grapevine cultivation of the region.