

HISTORICAL “SNAKES & LADDERS”

Introductory verse

If you really want to know
How best to love the town,
Get on Board! And off we go,
There's lots to see, so smile don't frown!
The city gates are open wide,
The walls are thick, the mountain strong;
Lone and majestic in its pride,
It's on our seal, could that be wrong?
A city full of history
That you should love to learn,
So age to age, its memory
Is safe at every turn.

So does each one of you and all of you together want to know about the town?

Let's start here

THE IGVINE TABLES

Here's the first treasure trove! It's not gold but bronze: 7 sheets of bronze, the magnificent Iguvine Tables. They are written in Ancient Umbrian, the language of our ancestors, but the alphabets are different: the first four are in the Etruscan alphabet, the fifth in both Latin and Etruscan script and the sixth and seventh are just written in Latin script. We don't know who wrote them, but what we know for certain is what they are about: the rites and rituals, customs and religion of our Ancient Umbrian forefathers, gathered together with the twelve priests of the Confraternity called the *Fratelli Atiedii*. These twelve priests were the spiritual father-figures and guides of the community. Under their instructions various rituals took place: animal sacrifices (bullocks, pigs and others too) and propitiatory partaking of food. These were all phases in a ritual of thanksgiving, addressed, first and foremost, to the triad of gods: Jove, Mars and Vofione. We can see, in the foods that were eaten then, how there are links between that past and the present we know today: one example can suffice, the *mefa* was nothing other than the flat bread that we call, *crescia*, and that we still eat today. The priests also predicted the future by interpreting the flights of birds, in particular, magpies, crows and green woodpeckers and the last of these was especially propitious. The religious centre and site of the first settlement of that ancient civilisation was ... the Arce Fisia, that is to say, the Fisia Fortress, where ceremonial purification rites took place. Gradually, the Umbrians spread out onto the plain at the foot of Mount Ingino, building houses, practising their rituals and creating defences. We are going to stay in the upper part of the town...

but we have to get into our time machine and travel many centuries forwards from the time of the Ancient Umbrians. We are going to fly right over the Romans and their Empire and... land in the Middle Ages.

THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINTS MARIANO AND GIACOMO

In any important town full of history, with a strong and united population, certain points of reference cannot fail to be present and one of these is, undoubtedly, the Cathedral of Saints Mariano and Giacomo, otherwise known as the the Duomo of Gubbio. The building dates from the end of the 12th century, when a certain young man called Francis was living in Assisi and still enjoying feasting and carousing... we'll meet him again later. So the Cathedral is dedicated to Mariano and Giacomo, who were two martyrs, put to death for their faith. You can see images of them on the altarpiece attributed to Guiduccio Palmerucci also depicting the Madonna, the Baby Jesus and the Patron Saints of Gubbio.

THE DUKE'S PALACE

Our time machine is playing up... it was supposed to take us from 1100 to 1200, but right in front of it, here in the upper part of the town, it has found another monument that cannot be ignored. Right here, opposite the Cathedral, is the Duke's Palace! The Palace, now home to an important museum, was commissioned, in the 15th century, by Duke Federico da Montefeltro, but the construction was only completed under his successor, Guidubaldo I. The most illustrious among the architects that designed and created it was, without doubt, Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Today, inside the Palace, you can see the Duke...live! This is possible thanks to a hologram which shows him life-size, interpreted by an actor, moving about and speaking. Particularly fascinating is the recreation of Federico's study which was completed by Guidubaldo, after his father's death, and which was the work of the Minellis, highly skilled craftsmen from Gubbio. (*Throughout, there will be an accompaniment of soft but lively Renaissance music in the background*).

SAINT FRANCIS

Our time machine is now going backwards ... and this time it stops in the 13th century, when the Church of San Francesco was built. It is now in what is known as Piazza dei 40 Martiri, in proximity to the Public Gardens, the building which once housed the Hospital, the Loggia dei Tiratori and the Church of Santa Maria dei Laici or dei Bianchi, located under the Loggia. It is in Early-Gothic style but the most curious fact about it is the reason for its dedication... for not only has St. Francis of Assisi given his name to the Church, but before it was even built, he was present in this very place. Indeed, on the site of the present-day Church there was once the home of the Spadalunga family, and Giacomello Spadalunga was the person who gave Francis something to wear, something to put on his feet and something to eat when he arrived to preach in Gubbio in rags.

CHURCH OF THE VITTORINA

There is also another important site linked to the time Francis spent in Gubbio, the Church of the Vittorina or of Santa Maria della Vittoria. The Benedictine Monks at San Pietro gave the little Church to Francis in 1213, thanks to the intercession of Bishop Villano of Gubbio, who was a devoted friend of the Poor Man of Assisi. Thus the Church became the first Franciscan monastery in Gubbio. This was where the taming of the “malevolent wolf” took place, or as he was called in the book that tells the story of the Saint’s life and works, the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, “the most ferocious wolf of Agobbio”. “Come here! Brother Wolf” commanded the Saint, “I order you in Christ’s name, not to harm me or anyone else.” At these words the animal lay down at the Saint’s feet, as gentle as a lamb. The altar which commemorates this act of taming the wolf can now be admired in another Church which, by leaping ahead a few centuries, we’re going to visit now. (The melody of *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* can be used as an accompaniment throughout).

CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO DELLA PACE OR THE STONEMASONS’ CHURCH

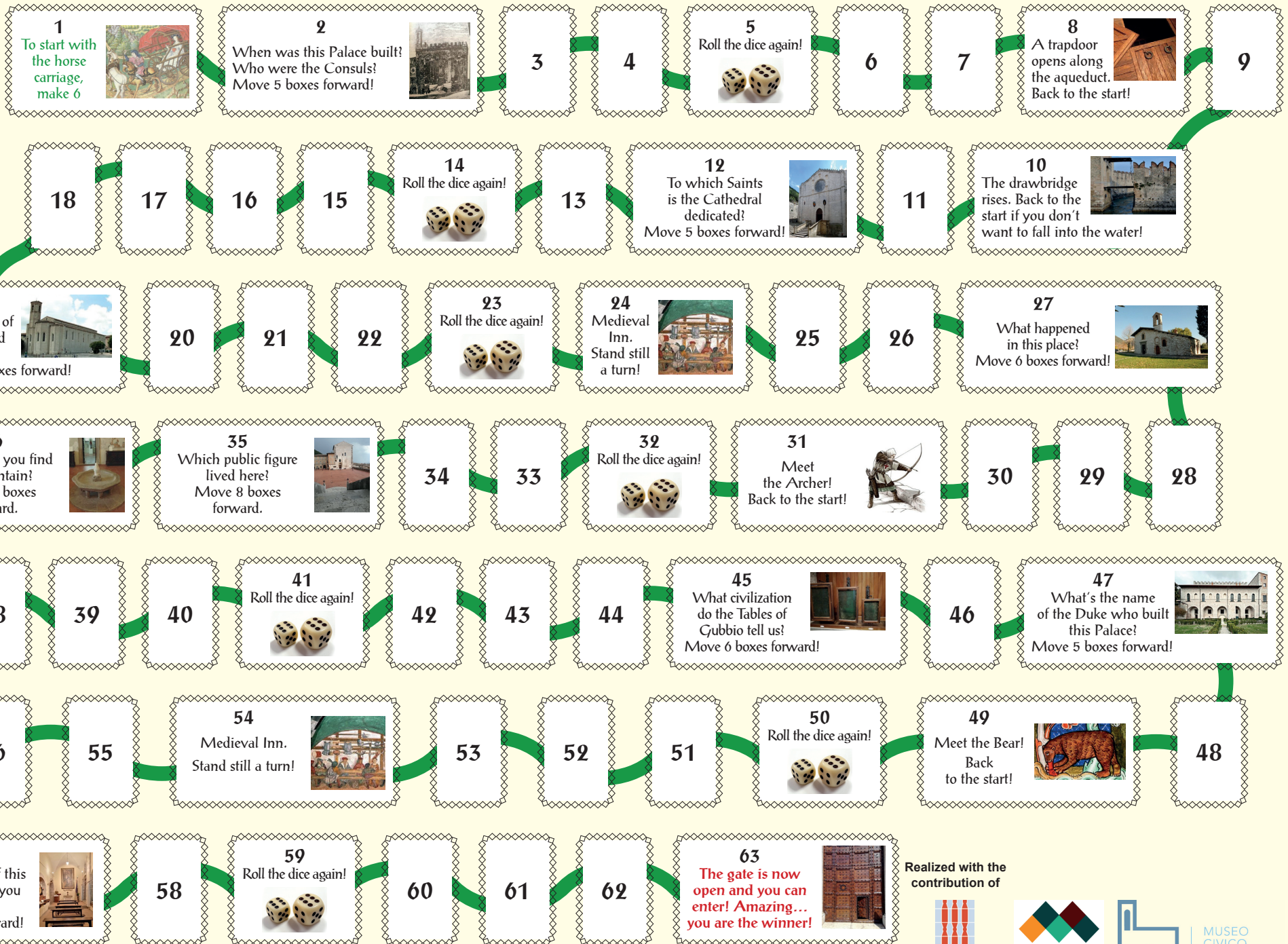
Commissioned by L’Università dei Muratori (Stonemason’s Guild), building work began on the Church, located in what is now known as Via Savelli, in 1615 over the grotto where, according to legend, the wolf tamed by St. Francis spent the rest of its days. At that time, the town was divided into Contrade (districts) and the one where the Church now is, was known as *Trivio Mors Lupis*, or *Crossroads Where The Wolf Died*. Inside the Church one can see the Processional Banner of the District, the Stone Altar commemorating the taming of the wolf, and the lid of a sarcophagus in which the remains of a wolf were discovered nearby, in 1873, and, in keeping with the legend and tradition, they were held to be those of the wolf tamed by St. Francis. The Church is also important because it is here that the three statues of the Saints Ubaldo, George and Anthony Abbot which are placed on top of the Ceri are kept and where the Medium-sized Ceri are also housed. (*Typical music from the Ceri Festival can be played at this point*).

PALAZZO DEI CONSOLI AND THE PALAZZO DEL PODESTÀ

The Palazzo dei Consoli was designed and built in the 14th century. This is the medieval period following the Fall of the Roman Empire and the Barbaric Invasions, when Free Communes were the order of the day and Gubbio, too, was a strong Commune, jealous of its independence. Do you remember the town seal, used for stamping its design onto a blob of melted wax to authenticate official documents? It is the fitting symbol of this spirit. The first decisions regarding the construction of the Palazzo were taken in 1321 and work began in the building site which would enable its creation. It became the residence of the Consuls who were the senior magistrates with power to govern the community and who, for the whole duration of their time in office, were assisted by a number of other functionaries: the Capitano del Popolo, the Conestabile, the Notaio delle Riformanze, the Cancelliere and the Gonfaloniere. There were eight Consuls, (*at this point someone could impersonate a Consul*) two elected for each of the four town districts (*quartieri*). They could not leave the Palazzo and, only in extraordinary circumstances, were they allowed to come into contact with other members of the population. They spent their days carrying out their duties and enjoying the privileges of their position in the Great Hall, which now houses the major part of the Art Gallery’s Collection, listening to the pleasant sound of lapping water from the fountain (*here there could be a sound effect reproducing water playing in a fountain*). This is the

Fons Arengi, which sources show was located in the upper part of the town before the Palazzo was built. A little later, in 1348, the Palazzo del Podestà was begun on the opposite side of the square from Palazzo dei Consoli: as the name indicates, it was the seat of the Podestà who, in the Free Commune, was the most senior functionary assisting the Consuls in governing the life of the town and, in some cases, even substituted them. Among the Podestà's duties was to direct the troops in time of war. Linking the two Palaces is Piazza Grande or Piazza della Signoria, a magnificent suspended square upheld by massive supporting structures, four gigantic arches, which are, nevertheless, light and harmonious. From 1508 until it was demolished, in 1839, there was a loggia where there is now a parapet, from which you get a wonderful view.

Palazzo dei Consoli has been the seat of our Civic Museum since 1909 housing its permanent collections: the Art gallery, the Ceramics Section, exhibits illustrating the Risorgimento and the culture of Tibet, the display of the Iguvine Tables, the Archaeological Collection and an important Coin Collection, which is especially relevant as, in the past, Gubbio had a famous and productive Mint.



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MUSEO CIVICO
PALAZZO
DEI CONSOLI