



GRAND HOTEL  
COCUMELLA





*In the sixth year, after the Jesuits had established themselves in Naples, they opened up a "College", a house which also accommodated public schools. The director, Cristofaro Mendoza, with a letter dated October 23, 1557 informed Father Giacomo Lainez, who was Saint Ignatius' successor in the direction of the Society of Jesuits, that the city of Sorrento wanted to host the Jesuits in Saint Antonio's Church in Sorrento.*

*This invitation wasn't considered. A better answer was obtained forty years later by a Sorrentine gentleman, devoted to the Jesuit Society, Gianvincenzo De Angelis, uncle of the Jesuit Francesco Antonio De Angelis who was a famous missionary in Ethiopia. Having understud that the Neapolitan Society, with its almost one hundred and thirty monks, most of them young students, needed a house in a climatic place for the "convalescence" of the sick ones, proposed to fianciate this project.*

*He owned in Piano di Sorrento (this term at the time included Meta, Piano, and S. Agnello) a mile away from the city, a terrace over-looking the sea with a private descent to the seacoast and a garden which he rented for 14 ducats, called the Cocumella.*

*With a donation contract dated August 14, 1597, signed in the presence of the notary Vincenzo Stayano from Naples, modified by another two contracts signed on February 06, 1608 and October 12, 1611 signed this time in the presence of the notary Francesco Antonio Stinca, Gianvincenzo obliged himself to build a house for the monks of the Neapolitan College in the Cocumella and promised to give an annual donation of 300 ducats, with the onerous for the monks to open up a Latin Grammar School.*

*A donation on behalf of Father Aniello Pollio in 1614 raised the annual donation to 400 ducats.*

*Many years went by before the construction of the house was terminated and finally, in 1637, the "Sorrentine residence" was opened with a priest and a brother coadjutor.*

*In that occasion the General Father, Vitelleschi, reminded to the Neapolitan Provincial their agreement on the opening of the Latin Grammar School, so he wrote on May 2, 1637: "on the opening up of the Sorrentine residence Your highness will consider the agreement on the foundation".*

*The structure was simple and decorous, with a big court-yard surrounded by high walls and a very well shaped well in the middle of the court-yard, arising from a large and deep cistern in Roman style which received rain water, transported by earthenware canals crossing the loves of Piano di Sorrento.*

*On three sides of the arcade there were many rooms, on the forth side there was a terrace overlooking the garden offering a wonderful sight of the Gulf of Naples.*

*This convalescence house, although privileged by its enchanting position, wasn't used very much because in 1629 thanks to a donation Franz Maria Bermundez de Castro, another Nursing Home was built for the sick people of the Neapolitan College a recommended place for patients sick of phthisis and which was reached easier than the Sorrentine residence which was then only reachable by sea since there wasn't a road.*

*Thanks to Father Nicola Partmio Giannettasio (1648-1715) the Cocumella acquired importance and fame. This famous humanist of great culture, was a Math professor in the College in Naples, and being of delicate health, he loved to spend his summer-autumn vacations (August, September, October) at the Cocumella and in 1705, having retired, spent the last years of his life helping the Sorrentine inhabitants.*

*For ten years until his death, although he was very weak, he dedicated himself to intense activities. Friend of the learned Archbishop Filippo Anastasi, he would very willingly go to the Diocese Seminary to teach rhetoric philosophy and theology. On holidays he would spend six hours in the confessional box and in the afternoon he would explain the bible to many people. With 4000 (four thousand) ducats, which he obtained by selling his books spread all over Europe, he was able to build from the foundations, next to a tower, already built which was used as a guard tower, a beautiful church, designed by himself, where on the pediment this dedicatory epigraph:*

*PARTHENIAE GENITRICI  
/ VATES PARTHENIUS / A.  
MDCCVTII (To the Vergin Mother  
the Parthenius poet in the year  
1708).*

*The church, that the Capuchin Bonaventura of Sorrento in his Sorrento Sacra and Sorrento Illustre (S. Agnel- lo 1877) considers among the most beautified of the Sorrentine Peninsula, is shaped like a Greek cross with a dome and three altars. On the main altar there is a painting*

representing the Annunciation, signed and dated by a painter, registered in 1686 in the Congregation of the painters of the Gest'1 Nuovo, Joseph Castellano 1723.

On the left wing of the chapel, the painting on the altar figures Saint Ignatius who sends Saint Francis Xavier to India while the two paintings on the sides figure Saint Francis Borgia, third general of the Society of Jesuits and the novice Sairzt Stanislao Kostka.

The three paintings on the right wing of the chapel represent on the altar Saint Nicholas (Giannettasio's baptism name) and on the two sides the young Saints Louis Gonzaga and John Berlcmans. With this construction Giannettasio completed the opera founded by Gianvincenzo De Angelis, who wasn't able to built the church that he would have wanted to call Santa Maria del Gesù, with the words "del Gesù Jesus".

In his poems Giarmettasio mimics the Cocumella with the name gentled by the nymph Colom elide, felon which he thinks the name origins. A large description of the "amenissima villa" and of the entire Sorrentine Peninsula can be read in the first chapter of *Aestates Surrentinae*, an opera published in 1696 and republished in 1722 as a part of the "Annus Eruditus in partes quatuor scu stata tempora distributus" (the erudite year divided in the four seasons), which gathers the different conversations of various learnings mainly archeological, with the friends of the Sorrentine residence (*Aestates Surrentinae*, 1696; *Autumni Surrentini*, 1698), in that of Portici (*Ver Herculanum*, 1704) and in the Masseria Grande of Pianura next to Pozzuoli (*Hiemes Puteolanae*, opera postuma 1722). In the seventh chapter of the same opera, Giannettasio speaks about the visit from Naples of his "very dear friend" Antigene the literary name of the famous learned and booklover Giuseppe Valletta (1636-1714), who standing in front of the poet's room, the last on the left wing

on the first floor, said, "I would like that on the left they paint the Mount of Parnaso with the horse Pegaso and on the right Pindo with the Peneo River and on its shores Apollo and the Muses; with this inscription:

“Hic Musis locus ille el Phebo cognitus, ex quo  
Artem piscator, navita, miles habet”.

*(This is the place which is familiar to the Muses and Febo and the place from where the seaman, the fisherman and the soldier receive their art). This saying of the Valletta is an allusion to three poems on the art of navigation, fishing and war (Nautica 1685; Halieutica, 1689; Bellica, 1697), that Giamattasio wrote mainly during his vacations at the Cocumella.*

*To these three poems, that made him very famous in Europe, he later added a fourth one on the art of naval wars (Naumachica, 1714); Together with the nautical poem he also published some fishing eclogue (Piscatoria), in which, following the example of his compatriot facapo Sarmazzaro, he substituted the peasants with the fishermen of Mergellina.*

*The four didactic poems and the eclogue, together with an earlier poem on Saverio (Saberides) which he didn't complete and the refrain in the prose of the Annu & Eruditus sum up to a total of over 43,000 hexameters, an unbeatable production of an elegant and prolific poet.*

*Another important personality who was attracted to the Cocumella by his friendship with the poet, was the Cardinal Giacomo Cantelmo, Archbishop of Naples from 1691 to 1702. This man, of extraordinary humanistic learning cared so much for our Partenio that he treated him as one of the family, not disdainingly to spend, not one, but many days in the silence of his Sorrentine journey.*

*Some chapters of his Aeslales Sunentinae and Autumni Surrentini describe the archeological excursion of this important guest together with his friend to Villa Pollio in Sorrento and to the Villa of Tiberio on the island of Capri, where they didn't omit the visit to Tiberio's Grotto, called the "Blue Grotto" by the residents of the island.*

*Towards 1730 the Sorrentine residence was suspended, while the Latin Grammar School remained, and was entrusted for a couple of years to a diocesan priest who earned 30 ducats a year. This sus-*

*pension lasted until the Jesuits were expelled from the Reign of Naples, which took place in 1767. Then the Cocumella, as well as the other belongings of the Jesuits, became property of the State. In 1770, the officer Bernardo Buono referred to the Minister Tanucci: "In relation to the properties of the Society of Piano di Sorrento,*



*there is a specious church, a comfortable house, a fruit garden of moggia 8 1/2 with another garden of moggia 1 1/2 of citrus fruits. All this property sums up to a value of 6800 ducats”.*

*The officer suggested that King Ferdinanda IV should buy this “specious place consisting of a College, farm, garden and a private descent to the sea coast to enjoy either fishing or hunting” (State Archives, Royal House, issue 1313). A 1718 document of the same year speaks about “a farm rented for 30 ducats per year and of a little walled garden that belonged to the expelled Society for their private use”. He added that “the expelled kept a priest to say mass, to teach, to take care of the Church and garden and of whatever else was needed and was given 98 ducats a year. After his death, a temporary chaplain had to replace him in order that the nearby people could attend mass and that their children could attend school”. (Issue 1314).*

*The king did not agree to buy. It had already been decided that the “Royal Boarding School of the Cocumella” was to be opened as in fact, it opened in 1771 for the orphans of the sailors of the area “and of the Amalfi Coast under the direction of the Marquis Berardo Galiani. Since Galiani died in 1774, the boarding school was suppressed, moving the boarding students to the Neapolitan Nautical boarding school, established in the abolished Jesuit College of San Giuseppe in the Riviera di Chiaia and the Cocumella was put on sale.*

*In 1780 Don Aniello Gargiulo, “Rector and Chaplain of the Royal Church of the Cocumella in Sorrento” was charged to teach in the school, respecting Don Gianvincenzo De Angelis’ will, for 30 ducats per year besides the 40 ducats he received for the care of the Church (Issue 1389 his).*

*In 1791, when the Church wasn’t yet property of the State, the civil authorities received this petition: “the inhabitants of Sorrento state that the Jesuit Church is abandoned with seri-*

*ous damage to both the public and divine cult and we ask that something be done to save the Church from such misuse” (issue 1470).*

*The Cocumella house with its garden and farm was sold in 1777 for 10.800 ducats to Pietro Antonio Gargiulo, whose heirs transformed, by adding a second floor, into a hotel, the actual Hotel Cocumella, the oldest health, rest and fun resort of the Sorrentine Peninsula.*



