



# ITINERARIO LIBERTY



## The Chamber of Commerce Building

The building which accommodates the premises of the Chamber of Commerce of Florence goes back to the second half of the 19th-century. Although it is a building of relatively recent construction, it nevertheless has an antique heart, having inherited the site of a building of very great historical interest, the Tiratoio of Piazza d'Arno, also known as "of the beams" attributed by some to Arnolfo di Cambio. The Tiratoio was an "industrial" building, specifically organized for drying woollen materials after the processes of fulling, washing or dyeing. Here, as in other similar buildings, situated in the urban area, a great part of the Florentine wool production was concentrated. These particular productive structures belonged to the rich and powerful corporation of the Art of Wool and were at the disposal of the Florentine wool merchants, who could carry out a part of their production and trading there.

When the medieval corporations of the Arts were definitively dissolved by Pietro Leopoldo, the vast patrimony of the Arts of Wool was entrusted to the newly-born Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the Tiratoio of Piazza d'Arno, together with other important productive structures, became the property of the Chamber. Later, when the desire of the Grand Duke was that of realizing a new building capable of housing together the Chamber, the Stock Exchange of Commerce and the National Bank of Tuscany, the choice of the area occupied by the antique Tiratoio appeared to be the most natural. The area was sufficiently large and the position central, and the Tiratoio, even though still in use, could be demolished, because the wool industry had undergone a decline. Reasons of urban decorum and also security, seeing that its structures were mainly wooden, justified its demolition. Such an operation was made easier by the fact that the Tiratoio already belonged to the Chamber of Commerce.

In the history of this building one may read the continuity between medieval Florence, the grand-ducal one, and the birth of the new "Palace of the Stock Exchange", still the premises of the Florentine Chamber of Commerce. The antique building of the Tiratoio left in inheritance the difficult symbolic representation of the economy of Florence on the spectacular scenario of the Arno embankment.

In the course of time, the transformations of this building, through unifications and structural and architectural modifications, have been countless.

It is important to remember an internal restructuring which had, above all, involved the eastern side, realized and put into effect by the architect Ugo Giusti between 1914 and 1915. This intervention of Giusti, who in that period was simultaneously involved in the realization of the Berzieri Thermal Baths in Salsomaggiore, which would make him famous, was very limited and destined only to the rearrangement of the rooms. The most interesting intervention worth mentioning was the realization of an atrium, previously non-existent, at the entrance from Piazza dei Giudici, enhanced by the mural decorations with tempera of Galileo Chini. It is interesting to know that this decoration, in neo-Renaissance style, is still in existence on the ceiling of the atrium, even though currently hidden behind the subsequent furnishings in wood.

While externally the building remained unchanged for a number of years, in 1931 an intervention was decided upon which foresaw the elevation of the whole attic, thus obtaining the second floor, and bringing the building to its present volumetry.