

Places of Delight

Between the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s Valderice began to be embellished with sumptuous villas where the local gentry would spend long holidays. Villa Minaudo-Quartana (today called Villa Adragna), built at the beginning of the twentieth century, is a fine example of such villas displaying rigorously geometrical lines inspired to Gothic and Romanesque architecture. A unique feature of the villa is its garden in which Italian, exotic styles and a rockery harmoniously blend together.

Another villa surrounded by a vast park is Villa Adragna d'Altavilla (today called Villa Betania). Originally thought as a manor house serving the estate, it was later extended and redesigned as a holiday residence, and restored at the beginning of the 1900s. The complex, which features monumental buildings, became property of the Bishopry of Trapani in 1948, and, thanks to the meritorious Padre Antonio Campanile, today it hosts a Psycho-Pedagogic Medical institute established in 1960.

Below what is today the municipal pinewood, on land that belonged to the convent of St Francis in Erice, at the beginning of the twentieth century, senator Giuseppe D'Ali commissioned a holiday house which later became property of the Manzo family first and then of the current owners, the Abate family. The house, Villa Maria Grazia, stands in the middle of a lush park with splendid views of the sea and it currently serves as a pleasant tourist facility.

Villa Elena, located along the Valderice-Bonagia road, is among the finest and most attractive nineteenth century buildings in the area. The Salerno Fallucca family, Baron Nicolò Alberto Barberi and the Stabile barons can be counted among the owners. After the Second World War the house became property of the Pappalardo family and, before being acquired by its current owners, the Stella family, it belonged to the Genna family, who named the villa after Elena Regis Genna, a famous operetta singer who lived there in the 1960s. A private chapel can be accessed through the front of the building. Behind the altar an empty frame hangs, where once was a painting of Madonna di Custonaci, which was stolen. On the floor visitors can see a tombstone dating back to 1861.

Along the same road, which was inaugurated in 1864, linking Bonagia's small harbour to 'Paparella' (Valderice) to facilitate the passage of the local gentry, stands Villa Pilati. The villa is a typical example of rural building where from the second half of the eighteenth century onward landowners from Erice began to spend summers between Valderice and the coast. Former owners include the Palizzolo and the Pilati di Rocca Giglio families, and today it is property of Maria Antonietta Aula, nephew of the Marquise Antonietta Pilati Riccio di San Gioacchino.