

A year full of unique tales to celebrate 80 years of an Italian legend.

1935 was a year of change in world events. On the one hand technical and scientific innovations were on the rise, the world was getting smaller through the roaring development of transport; and on the other hand the world was rushing to rearm itself, the first sign of the conflicts that were to change the course of history in the years that would follow immediately afterwards.

Against that setting Count Gaetano Marzotto Jr. (1894-1972) bought a vast estate from the Stucky family between Villanova and Portogruaro, Venice, a thousand hectares of the lowlands (140 hectares of vineyards) that sprawl out towards the Adriatic Sea; a terrain steeped in history, used by the Roman Empire in Venice as its grain and wine belt, but which had by now fallen into decline.

Here, in an estate that needed massive transformations, Gaetano Marzotto Jr. decided to turn his entrepreneurial vision into reality. Modern, managed agriculture, that could fulfil the increasing need for food products via major technological transformation, completely overhauling the agricultural element, completing the land reclamation works and setting up new cultivation, and above all, a radical change in social dynamics, getting rid of casual labour and stabilising employment and income. This characteristic was to be extended to and maintained by the farmers and external suppliers: a social sustainability programme which is nowadays one of the Santa Margherita wine producing model's strengths.

The founder's vision was the result of the sound knowledge of not only the laws of economics which he had developed in the textiles industry, where he had learnt his trade, but also of deep-rooted international relationships and experiences developed over previous decades, which he had furthered through personal study and travels in the world's major agricultural areas.

These ground breaking ideas gave rise to Santa Margherita - the name was taken from his beloved wife, Margherita Lampertico Marzotto, who died in 1939- and the innovative ideas that were to make it stand out in its first eighty years of business.

Since it was founded, Santa Margherita has indeed shown a distinctive character, becoming an actual case history, and an example of the rebirth of a country in the Post-War period, visited and studied by politicians and economists (in Time Magazine in 1963 it was mentioned as one of the protagonists of the "Italian Miracle").

Here Gaetano Marzotto Jr. invested non only enormous resources, but also made an intense, continuous personal commitment.

The clearest example is the "construction" of Villanova modelled on the "new city" of Valdagno.

Villanova was not much more than a farming village, in the centre of the original estate, with just a handful of stone cottages (including "Casa Rossa", the Red House dating back to



the late 1600s which houses the Wine Group's headquarters) and surrounded by large areas of swampy marshland.

It underwent a phenomenal transformation. Besides setting up a water and drainage network, he saw to the building of an industrial complex, staff dwellings, kindergarten, professional schools, rest home, medical practices, meeting places and seaside bathing facility, in Jesolo, with a common architectural design.

Production of quality wine began almost immediately, reaching the definitive approach in 1961 with Pinot Grigio. For the first time this grape variety underwent off-the-skin vinification and it was an immediate success: The doors to the US market were opened (where it remains the icon of Italian whites even today) paving the way for a new generation of wines which would set out from Italy to conquer the world.

From that moment on it was all about expansion and new estates were gradually added to the original centre in Fossalta di Portogruaro. Kettmeir in Alto Adige, Ca' del Bosco in Lombardy, Tenimenti Lamole and Vistarenni in Chianti Classico, Terrellade in Sicily, Sassoregale in the Maremma, Torresella in the Eastern Veneto and Refrontolo in the heartlands of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene appellation where, since 1952, Santa Margherita has been producing one of the first Prosecco Spumante wines with the Charmat method.

But the innovations don't stop here. Carrying on the Marzotto skill in producing renewable source energy (hydroelectric plants that have been powering the Berico textiles area since the Nineteenth Century, Santa Margherita has become completely energy self-sufficient thanks to two specific projects, which are a biomass generator and a photovoltaic plant, which annually prevent 240 tons of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.

All this - along opting for full sustainability in the vineyards and setting up a carbon neutrality strategy - is captured in the special logo which has been appearing in all Santa Margherita Wine Group communications since 1st January. It's a simple, straightforward message, a green leaf indicating the agricultural tradition and the green business direction of what is nowadays one of Italy's leading companies in the wine industry and an established icon of "Made in Italy" throughout the world, with the reins firmly held by its founder's family, which was now reached the seventh generation working in the company.

A programme of monthly narratives will without fail go back and look at important moments, rediscovering the estates in territories with an extraordinary propensity for quality wine production, in order to offer a sample of a few lines on quality wines that are enjoying increasing success in the wine market.

January 2015