

Domenico Castelli

Italian architect
(c.1582-1657),

He was born in Melide (Canton Ticino), in the ninth decade of the sixteenth century (perhaps 1582) by a Bernardo. Unknown is the mother's name. A document testifies to his presence since 1611 in Rome where he lived, together with his brother Battista stonemason, in a house to the "pantani".

His first work seems to be the project for the fountain of Piazza Grande in Faenza, built in 1619-21; but it is in Rome that he worked almost uninterruptedly from 1624 to 1657 as an architect of the workshops of the Reverend Apostolic Chamber. Castelli was, in fact, appointed above from the 1st week, 1624, and measurer from the 1st Feb. 1638, positions that held simultaneously until October 30th 1644.

In July 1631 he was entrusted by the Conservatives of the "alma city of Rome" with the task of architect of the *Studium Urbis* which he held until September 1632, when he was succeeded by Francesco Borromini, while in 1646 his name appears in a list of the architects and sub-masters of roads used by the Presidency of the Streets. He was then again appointed as a meter by the 1st Aug. 1648, and from 22 April 1656 Pope Alexander VII granted him the office above, charges that Castelli simultaneously covered up to 30 Aug. 1657.

He was also architect of the Arciconfraternita della Carità since 1644, succeeding in the assignment to F. Peparelli, and architect of the Fabbrica di S. Agostino from 1653 to 1656, the year in which he was succeeded by F. Borromini.

From a posthumous document, we know that at his death the "offitij" of architect of Acqua Paola, of Campidoglio, and of the Acque were also vacant; as well as the following pious places remained vacant: the Arciconfraternita della SS. Annunziata, the Hospital of S. Giacomo degli Incurabili, the monastery of S. Silvestro, the monastery of the Virgins, the monastery of S. Cecilia and the Arciconfraternita del Gonfalone. It should also be remembered that Castelli dedicated to Urbano VIII a treatise on the reclamation of the waters of Romagna, with its relative plan.

Castelli, as the architect above the Apostolic Chamber, took part in the works of the Vatican Palace, carried out between 1623 and 1625; to the works of the Palace of Monte Cavallo, carried out between 1623 and 1627; to the works of the palace of Castel Gandolfo, executed from 1623 to 1625 under the direction of Carlo Maderno; to the restoration of the church of S. Bibiana, of the Sisto bridge, and of the Quattro Capi bridge executed in 1624; the works of the Barberini palace, carried out between 1625 and 1629 under the direction of Carlo Maderno; and again, to the works of the Rotonda church carried out in the years 1625-33.

Castelli directed the restoration of the church of S. Lorenzo in Fonte, in via Urbana, carried out between 1628 and 1629; as well as directed the restoration works of the baptistery of S. Giovanni in Fonte, which were carried out between 1629 and 1635; while, always as above, he participated in the works for the fortress of Nepi in 1628; for the fortress of Frascati in 1629; for the banks of the river of Farfa from 1633 to 1640; for the castle of Saracinesco from 1635 to 1642; for the façade of S. Anastasia from 1635 to 1640; for the fortress of Spoleto and for the fortress of Terracina executed in 1636; for the castle of Mugnano from 1636 to 1643; for Castel Sant'Angelo from 1636 to 1644; for the "passionate" of Fiumicino performed, under the direction of G. De Vecchi, from 1637 to 1642; for the fortress of Castel Nuovo di Porto; for the granaries at Ripa Grande and for the Toscanella customs house executed in 1637. Between 1637 and 1638 Castelli also directed the restoration of the church of S. Urbano alla Caffarella; and again in 1638 he designed and built the high altar for the basilica of the SS. Cosma and Damiano.

Moreover, as above mentioned, Castelli participated in the work for the granaries of S. Anastasia in 1638; for the S. Angelo bridge from 1639 to 1643; for the fortress of Rocca Priora from 1641 to 1642; for the palace of the Apostolic Chamber of Neptune from 1642 to 1643; for piazza Sciarra in 1642; for the castle of Monte San Giovanni in 1642-43; and finally, again in 1642, he visited the places where the new ironworks were to be held at Monteleone di Spoleto; while in 1644 he went with Girolamo Rinaldi to Camaiola to redo the "thick wall", and visited the Chiane alla Pieve.

As a measurer, Castelli took part in the works carried out in the cloister and in the convent of S. Carlino at the Quattro Fontane, conducted under the direction of Francesco Borromini from 1636 to 1642; in the monastery of the nuns of the SS. Incarnation in Strada Pia, under the supervision of the Arigucci from 1639 to 1646; and at the same time from 1638 to 1644 he measured and estimated the work done by the various workers in the palaces of the Vatican, of Monte Cavallo, of Castel Gandolfo, of Vigna Giulia, in the basilica of the SS. Cosma and Damiano, in S. Caio and in Ponte Sisto.

It was still Castelli to draw up two measures of estimates on behalf of the Apostolic Chamber, of which the first, of 31 May 1638, refers to "all the sites placed in Castel Candolfo" and granted by Urban VIII to Prince Taddeo Barberini; the second, dated 1639, refers to the "enlarged sites to the vineyard called the garden of the lake in Castel Gandolfo".

Castelli designed the cathedral of Monterotondo built in 1639 by the prince prefect Taddeo Barberini; he is also credited with the project of the portico and wooden choir of the church of S. Isidoro, built in 1640-41, as well as that of the chapel of St. Anna, in the same church, of which he acquired the patronage rights in 1655. From 1644 to 1657 Castelli signed the measurements and estimates of the work done in the prisons of Tor di Nona and in various houses, located in Rome, owned by the Arciconfraternita di S. Girolamo della Carità; while in 1649 he was appointed appraiser of the Archconfraternity of Charity and of the College of the English for an agreement and lease of October 15, to which is attached a map of the block of the church of S. Edmund in Trastevere, signed by him; also for the same Archconfraternity, he also directed the works of the façade of the church of S. Girolamo della Carità from 1652 to 1657. Another testimony of his activity as an expert is given by an act of exchange of land - one of which is located in "Mareni territory", in the place called "scoda nibbio", the other place meeting at the Osteria delle Frattocchie, in the place called "Tor Leonarda" - stipulated between the cardinal Francesco Barberini and the constable Marco Antonio Colonna in December 1648, to which are attached the respective plants signed by him. As architect of the Acqua Paola, in 1646 he visited with V. Spada and the architect Contino the water of the Ampolline, in the territory of Anguillara, and as above of the Apostolic Chamber in 1656-1657 he also took care of the construction of the church of S. Agnese.

Appointed for the second time as a measurer of the Apostolic Chamber, Castelli worked from 1648 to 1657 on the work done in the palaces of the Vatican, of Monte Cavallo, of S. Giovanni in Laterano, of Vigna Giulia and of Castel Gandolfo, in Castel Sant'Angelo, on the Isola Famese, to the "passonate" of Fiumicino, and to Ponte Molle; as well as participated in the restoration of the fountain in Piazza Colonna executed in 1656 under the direction of Bernini.

Castelli was also the superintendency to the works of the monastery of the converted and of the church of S. Giacomo alla Lungara, executed according to the project of the Arrigucci; as also attributed to him the project of the church of S. Maria in Campo Carleo, also called of the SS. Conception of the Virgin Mary, built by Cardinal Francesco Barberini.

Castelli died in Rome on 14 October. 1657 (Arch. Of the Vicariate, S. Maria in Trastevere, *Liber mortuorum* , 2, verse 73v) and was buried in S. Isidore in the chapel of St. Anne.

From the last testament of Castelli (16 September 1657) we know that he named his heir the Cardinal Francesco Barberini, to whom he left, among other things, his drawings of works erected under the pontificate of Urban VIII, today preserved in Bibl. Ap. Vaticana, *Barb . lat .* 4409, while to

his nephew Bernardo, who was the son of his brother Giovan Battista, he bequeathed two houses, a post in front of the oratory of S. Maria in Trastevere, the other in S. Eligio in via Giulia.

by Marco Palma - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 21 (1978)

Translated from:

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/domenico-castelli_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/domenico-castelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)