

THE ROOTS OF THE FUTURE LIE IN THE PAST – 27 JUNE 1908

31 October 2018, Arsiero – ITALIA

It is important to remember and it is absolutely crucial not to forget. The past and all of its heritage belong to us; it is part of us.

What do we know about Siderforgerossi's history and the backdrop to its founding? Furthermore, why was the chosen location on the slopes with the Asiago plateau on one side and the huge Monte Priaforà on the other, with the scene completed by the lofty peaks of Monte Cimone and Monte Caviujo at the end of the Tonezza plateau towering over the plain?



Large quantities of water combined with sloping ground is a great source of potential energy; as long as this is combined with, as in this case it has been, the ability to channel and make use of this energy. In fact, all along the Astico and the Posina River the canals and hydraulic systems were evidence of this many years ago. The water was not only used for mills or as power for hydraulic cutting machines, but also to heat charcoal to be used for drop hammers.



Hydraulic stone wheels

There was another important natural resource in this area; the trees from the nearby woods which climb along the slopes of the surrounding valleys. And with the woods the strong arms of the woodcutters and the infinite patience of the charcoal burners. There is the evidence that as early 1200 there were many miners in the mountains above Tonezza, towards Folgaria. This is proved by the names of

some of the neighbouring villages; Forni (in Italian "furnaces") where the iron found in the area was melted and refined; Fusine (from "fucina", meaning "forge").

If we add to all these resources the proximity of a flourishing plain, we can see why the area of Arsiero had a long term vocation. This vocation, however, in order to be fulfilled, needed the decisive factor which was found in the form of a man and his wisdom and spirit of autonomy and enterprise, along with his self-discipline and strong sense of community which is typical of the valley inhabitant in particular.



Original factory

So it is that a hundred years ago, when Siderforgerossi was founded (though at that time that was not its name), the surrounding areas of Arsiero were populated not only by mills and sawmills, but also by forges which worked copper and iron, for which irrigation ditches were used as a source of power, and run in such a way as to allow them to be used by many local inhabitants. In these forges axles for carriages, wheels, chains, knife blades, nails, spades, shovels, axes and various other implements were produced, thus supplying the nearby countryside and farmers. So the tradition of working metals, which later gave rise to the beginnings of industry and the fast growing developments of



The inside of the old factory

the last decades, had solid roots in local culture and family life. This was another important factor but again would not have been sufficient to explain the success of the industry if it were not for the fact that among the descendants of these ancient dynasties of craftsmen, the heir of what by now had become a small industry was a man endowed with courage, winning strategy, intuition and a strong spirit of enterprise.



Metalworking pliers and tools used during that time

From a careful study of the historical documents in the possession of the Rossi family, there emerges, as already touched upon, a concrete link with the activity of the blacksmiths of the 19th century, as is demonstrated also by the mill, still present, which dates from the end of 1800's. These documents show that Coriano Rossi, along with two partners, Angelo Rossi and Giuseppe, whose surname was also Rossi, was the owner of the drop hammer and of the right to use the water for handling the hammer from the far back date of 1908.

As for the drop hammers in the area, the production of the Rossi firm's hammer was aimed at satisfying local demand, in particular for farming tools such as hoes, spades, wedges, crowbars and knives. The stone quarries and woods, which at that time were an important resource, required chisels, cudgels, axes, bill hooks and pickaxes. The hammer was used mainly by the three families mentioned above, better known in the area by their surnames: the "Palma" family, i.e. Coriano Rossi, the "Picciotti" family, headed by Giuseppe Rossi and the "Bagattini" family, headed by Angelo, Natale and Napoleone Rossi.



Coriano Rossi

	Proprietario - Owner	Tipologia - Type		Proprietario - Owner	Tipologia - Type
1	Grotto Angelo - Innocente	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer	6	Fratelli Greselin	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer
2	Stella Isacco	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer	7	Molino Pellegrini	Molino - Mill
3	Rossi Luigi poi Grendene	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer	8	Segheria Simonato	Segheria - Sawmill
4	Ricatti Gianni	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer	9	"Palma"	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer
5	Maglio Conti	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer	10	Nardello Armando	Maglio da ferro - Iron hammer

These families also held State concessions for the use of the irrigation ditch and the flow of water determined the work of the hammer. The irrigation ditch, which supplied the hammer with water, also powered the Pellegrini mill and the Nardello cutting machine. It's not difficult to imagine the controversy and arguments which this shared use caused, in spite of the regulations which had been in place for many years.



Picture of Siderforgerossi plant in the 1970's

This is the story of the beginnings that are currently known and documented, more than 100 years on from the momentous day when the company was founded, on 27 June 1908. However, there is no doubt that our history stretches back even further. Therefore, expert academic staff will carry out research into our much more distant origins: could they date back to the Palladian era under the Republic of Venice or even to the time of the medieval communes? Soon all will be revealed by the documentary sources.