



Shrine interior (XIII century), and above, fresco fragment (XIII century).

*“Francis imitated the example of our father Abraham, when he spiritually left his land, his parents and the house of his father to move towards the land the Lord had shown him with his divine inspiration.*

*In order to run promptly toward the award of the heavenly vocation and to be able to enter easily through the strait gate, he got rid of the bag of earthly riches – following the steps of He who rich from eternity embraced poverty for us – dispersed them by sharing with the poor, so that his justice might remain forever”.*  
(19.VII.1228).

At the beginning of the XIV century Dante Alighieri came to Assisi to visit the places that signed the ascetical pilgrimage of Francis. Thinking of the historical role divine Providence reserved for the city of Assisi, he wrote in the *Divine Comedy*: **“A sun was there born to the world”!** The birth of Francis was then welcomed as a grace of a **new day**, very much waited for by the Church and the society badly needing regeneration. Assisi was hailed as the **mystical Orient that forboded a new history**:

*Yet he who makes word of that place  
let him not say Ascesi, since this would mean little  
but Orient, if he wants to name it properly.*

(Dante, Paradise, XI Canto)

This Shrine is holding the memory of such a birth that so much grace has lavished on the religious, social and cultural world for already eight centuries of human history. For today’s society it is also an invitation and proposal to promote new born life.

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*The Friars Minor Conventuals wish you:*

***Pax et Bonum***

SACRO CONVENTO DI SAN FRANCESCO  
06081 ASSISI-PG-ITALY

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# ORATORY OF SAN FRANCESCO PICCOLINO



**ASSISI**

**SHRINE DEDICATED TO NEWLY BORN**



# San Francesco Piccolino Shrine

## History and spiritual message

Among the places dear to the city of Assisi and to the Franciscan and Christian world there is – since the XIII century – that of **Saint Francis Infant (= Piccolo or Piccolino)**.

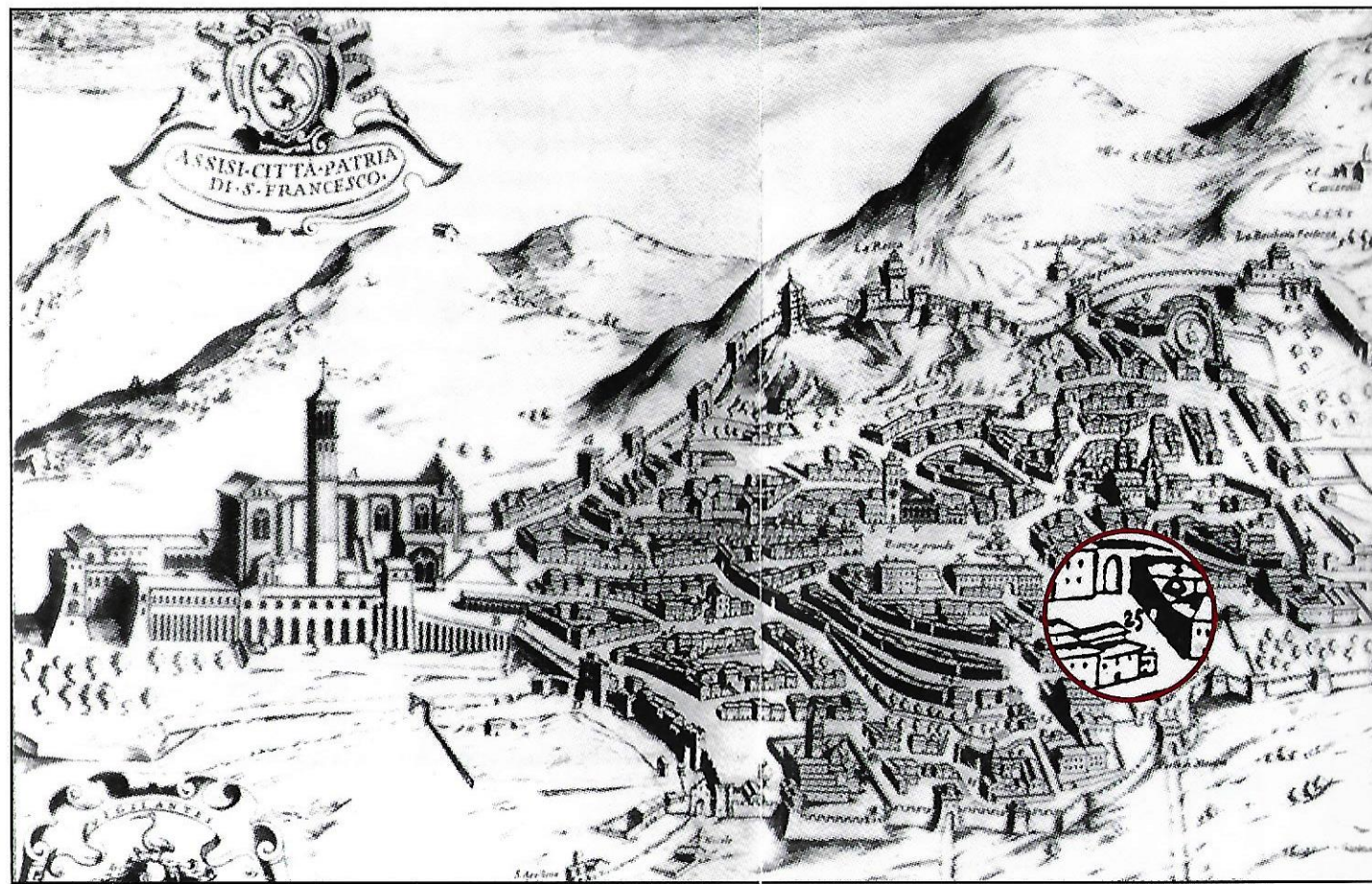
The archives of Assisi witness its existence as an oratory (= place of prayer) since August 28, 1286. At this date Lello di Guido signed here – “**in oratorio sancti Francis-**ci” – his last will asking to be buried in the Basilica of San Francesco.

It was a nephew of Francis, Piccardo of younger brother Angelo, that transformed a room on the groundfloor of the house that belonged to grandfather Pietro di Bernardone – now his propriety – in a holy place to remind the fellow citizens and foreigners the **birthplace** of the now famous and holy Uncle. Most probably the rededication took place in 1282, on the fall of the first centenary from the birth of Francis (1182). For well twenty nine years, Piccardo, a professed Franciscan Third Order member, had served the Basilica of San Francesco as *administrator* or *procurator* (1256 - 1285). It's the reason why the paternal house of the Saint that included an oratory will be left as a gift and heritage to the Sacro Convento and the Sepulchre-Church.

The thirteenth century **interior**, is now all in rustic Assisi stone. The pointed gothic vault reminds that of other oratories here in Assisi, included those of San Damiano and the Portiuncola chapel.

During the centuries the walls came to be dressed and redressed with episodal and votive frescoes. Restoration works in 1926 saved the older fragments, now partly shown on the main wall.

The **exterior facade** is crowned by a romanesque arch. In the lower section is the gothic entrance portal. The mixed romanesque-gothic whole structure of the facade is repeat-



ing that of the arches forming the *Porticato* on the south side of the Sacro Convento, realized in the same period by the Comacini architects. On the ogival arch is a latin verse in fourteenth century very elegant gothic letters. Once gilt – as Ludovico da Pietralunga reports in 1570 – the letters are saying: “***This oratory was the stable of the ox and donkey where Saint Francis, mirror of the world, was born***”.

The caption was added towards the half of the fourteenth century, when the episodes of the life of Francis began to be strictly matched with the evangelical ones of Christ. The place in which Francis was born began to be compared with the “stable” of Betlehem. Quite lately so the oratory began to be known also as *La Stalletta* (“The tiny stable”), a name and title bearing theological and spiritual

suggestions rather than episodal ones. A 1599 Assisi, realized by Giacomo Lauro, points out 28 tant monuments in the city. Our shrine is signed a “***San Francesco Piccolino, formerly stable where born***”.

In the 1469 *Statutes of the City of Assisi* it is identified “The Church where Blessed Francis was born” 1615, no other monument in Assisi refers to the life of Pietro Bernardone and Giovanna Pica, where the child that had to become Saint Francis of Assisi, saw the light and lived.

In the bull for the canonization of the Holy Man, Pope Gregory IX, wrote:



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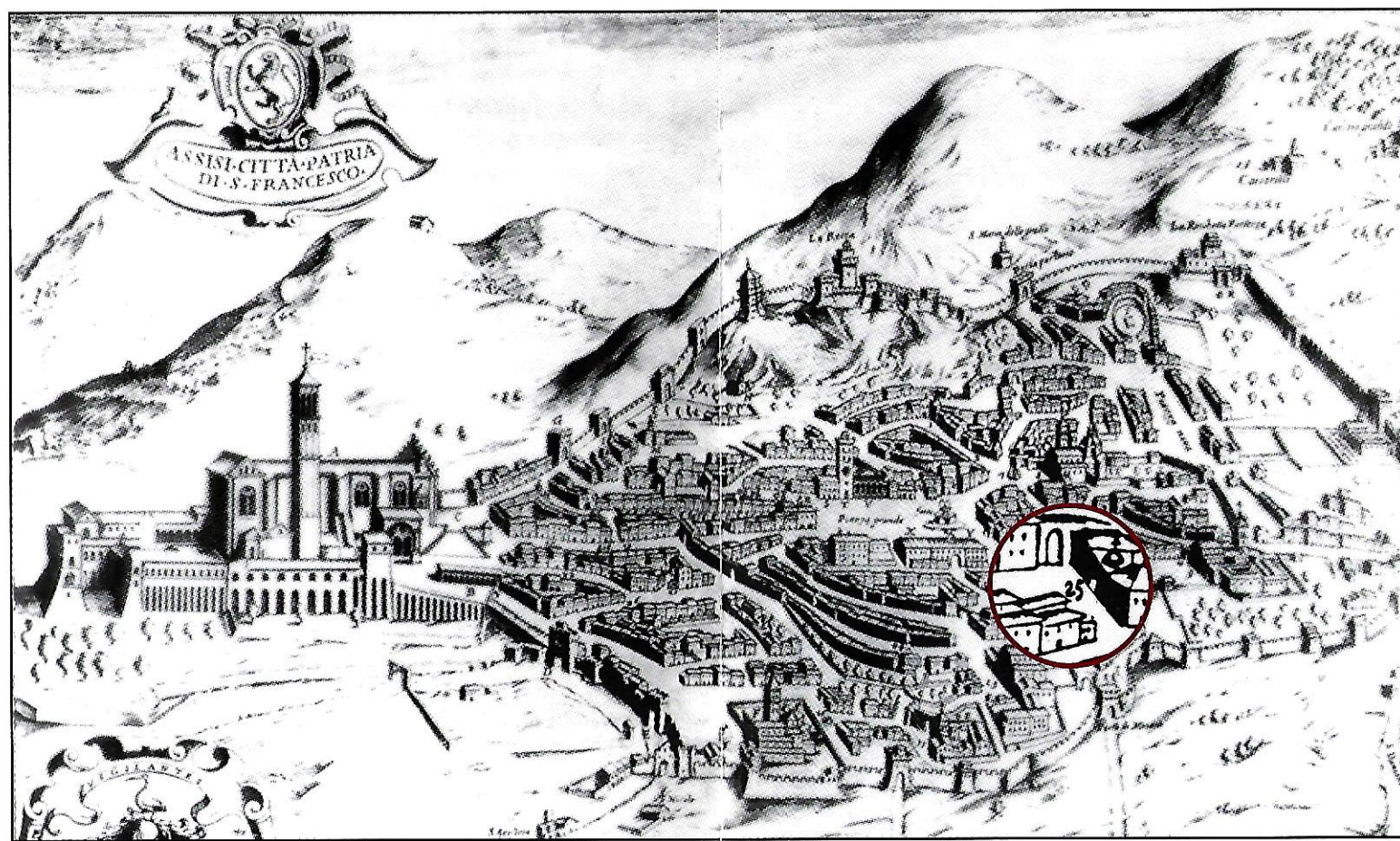
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