STORIES TO TELL

3 Stories of Historic Shops

Three shops, three families, three stories of continuity. Ready-to-use profiles for articles and features. To request interviews with the owners, please contact the project press office.

SINCE 1875 · HISTORIC CENTRE

Pesaro Antica Merceria: over 150 years in the heart of Ferrara

Founded in 1875, Pesaro Antica Merceria is one of Ferrara's historic businesses. It has come through more than a century and a half of change while keeping strong ties with the city and with its family tradition. Its 150th anniversary, celebrated in February 2025, marks a history spanning four generations.

The business was started by Aldo Pesaro under the Cathedral arcades (Portici del Duomo). In the 1930s, under Ciro Pesaro, the shop moved to Via Contrari, on the corner of Via Canonica. After the Second World War, Ivo Pesaro helped the business grow, expanding its range of haberdashery, fabrics, clothing and homeware. Since 2013 the shop has been back under the arcades of Piazza Trento e Trieste, where it still stands today.

The family's history is also intertwined with some of the most painful events in Ferrara's past, preserving a memory that goes beyond commerce. Today Pesaro still focuses on product quality, expertise and personal relationships with customers, which set it apart in the age of large chains and e-commerce.

The challenge for the future is to continue this journey, preserving the shop's identity and contributing to the vitality of Ferrara's historic centre.

SINCE 1928 · GAIBANELLA

Gaibanella, the Mascellani tobacco shop: a family story spanning almost a century

In Gaibanella, a village within the Municipality of Ferrara, the Mascellani family's tobacco shop is much more than a business: it is a piece of the village's history, made of memories, encounters and traditions handed down from generation to generation.

Opened in 1928, the shop came into the family in 1937. One of the most curious episodes dates back to the 1940s, when a customer with a passion for opera would sing in the shop, dedicating arias from Puccini to the owner, Tosca Mascellani. The scene was captured in a photograph now held in the FIT Historical Archive.

Over the years the shop has served many purposes, working at different times as a trattoria, café, delicatessen and petrol station. It was a meeting place for the community, where shopping went hand in hand with conversation and everyday life.

In 1968 Francesco Mascellani joined the business alongside his parents, later running it with his wife Roberta. Since 2016 their daughter Emma has owned the shop, while Francesco is still there every day. This continuity shows the value of a family tradition able to renew itself without losing its bond with the local area.

SINCE 1946 · VIA CANONICA

Felloni: 80 years in the heart of Ferrara

In 2026 Felloni celebrates eighty years in business, a milestone that tells of the bond between a historic retailer and the centre of Ferrara. The story began in 1946, just after the Second World War, and over time became part of the city's economic and social heritage.

The business was founded by Giancarlo and Dina Felloni, who opened their first shop in Via Mazzini. After an early period of growth and a move to Piazza Trento e Trieste, in 1958 Felloni arrived at Via Canonica 6, its historic home still in the heart of the city.

Over the decades the shop has built its identity on product quality, a carefully curated range and direct relationships with customers, adapting to changes in retail and shopping habits without losing the values that have shaped its history.

Felloni's eightieth anniversary is more than a business milestone. It is a testimony to the value of local retail. Its presence helps keep the historic centre alive and preserves a tradition of expertise, trust and human relationships, confirming the role of historic shops in Ferrara's identity.