

The Arch of Drusus in a photo by Pompey Molins



Subject

Photograph by Pompeo Molins, dated 1870. In the foreground we see the so-called Arch of Drusus, which still stands today near ‘Porta Appia’ or ‘Porta San Sebastiano’, the monumental entrance of the Regina viarum as it arrives in the Capital. This is one of the best-preserved city gates, which owes its current name to the nearby Basilica of San Sebastiano. In Molins’ ‘action view’, two uniformed men look toward the camera: one standing towards image centre, another sitting on the left with a tired air. A third figure turns his back to the camera as he gazes towards the Appia Antica and the Roman countryside beyond. These could be gendarmes on duty at the guard stations of the gate, perhaps identifiable as Savoyards and so dating the scene after the taking of Porta Pia, or tax officers on duty at the customs house – where a cart is seen parked. Until the demolition of this structure in the early 1900s, it was precisely the presence of the duty officers in the piazza of Porta San Sebastiano that rendered it a very lively place, frequented by travellers, soldiers and merchants.

Accession number 5972 ‘Fototeca Unione

Albumen print

1870

Placement

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Credits

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