



Buildings of ancient Rome

Temples of republican Rome

NARRATOR:

In the following tracks we will be exploring the remains of some of the republican temples in Rome. We will examine what is left, investigate their contexts and relate them, where possible to the men who built them.

We start below the western slopes of the Capitoline Hill at the Temple of Apollo. This was dedicated in 431 BCE by Gnaeus Julius, an ancestor of Julius Caesar, following a vow made during a plague that raged in the city.

That temple, dedicated to Apollo the Healer, was rebuilt many times, and these elaborate columns with alternating fluting were part of the temple rebuilt in the time of Augustus to celebrate victories over northern barbarians, and emphasise his links with the Julii.

To the south on the other side of the Theatre of Marcellus are three more temples, one next to the other, now partially incorporated into the church of San Nicola in Carcere

These were discovered in 1932 when the buildings around the church were demolished.

The oldest is the furthest North. It was probably the temple dedicated to the two faced god of beginnings Janus vowed in 260 BCE by Caius Duilius during his naval victory over the Carthaginians at Mylae in Sicily. Following this victory he celebrated the first ever naval triumph and the prows of the defeated vessels were taken and mounted as trophies on the Rostrum in the Roman Forum

What remains is most of the columns from one side and two columns from the other. These stand upon the remains of the podium.

The columns are ionic and made of grey tufo stone. Originally they were stuccoed to give the appearance of white stone.

The southernmost temple was smaller and probably dedicated to Spes – the goddess of Hope.

This was probably vowed by Aulus Atilius Calatinus during a victory over the Carthaginians and dedicated following a triumph in 257.

The temple was built using the Tuscan order, and only one row of columns from the northern side are preserved, built into the walls of the church.

Between these two temples lies a third, probably vowed to Juno Sospita by Caius Cornelius Cethegus who defeated the Insubrian Gauls in 197 BCE.

The order was ionic and built of grey tufo stone. One column can still be seen embedded in the façade of the church.

These three victory temples all lay along the side of the triumphal route to the forum. Parts of the arcading of the porticus along this road lie on the opposite side of the modern road.

Beyond these temples, on the banks of the river, are two further temples

The temple dedicated to Portunus, the god of customs duties, was built by the ancient port of

the city of Rome. Later in the second century one of the principal crossing points of the river Tiber was constructed close by.

The temple was originally established in the fourth century BCE. but the surviving structure dates back to the first century.

The temple is so well preserved because it was converted into a church. It has, however, been much restored; compare for example the restored parts with the un-restored columns and architrave.

Nevertheless it gives us an excellent idea of what an Italic temple would have looked like. The Italic temple, found throughout central and southern Italy, sat upon a high podium, a distinct difference from the Greek temple which rested upon three steps. The Italic temple could only be entered by steps at the front, and these steps were the focus of the ritual activity where the altar for sacrifices was positioned. Inside the temple was the home of the god, represented by a statue.

The columns of the temple rose from the podium. A Greek temple had free-standing columns on all four sides, but in an Italic temple columns were usually only at the front of the temple. If there were columns to the sides they were often engaged in the wall of the temple cella, forming a solid wall to the sides and rear of the temple.

The columns and overall proportions of the temple are Ionic; this was a Greek order of architecture but it was widely adopted throughout Italy.

The pediment would originally have contained sculpture, but it is now bare. Today this Ionic, Italic temple is plain stone, but when new it would have been brightly painted, creating a very different effect.

Next to the temple of Portunus lies another temple probably dedicated to Hercules Olivarius, long known – incorrectly – as the temple of Vesta.

This unusual temple is a complete contrast to the temple of Portunus. For a start it's circular. It is built upon three steps, and is constructed of bright white marble, imported from the Aegean. All of these characteristics point one way – the temple was built to a Greek design using the Corinthian order. No details are known about who established the temple, but it was erected at the end of the second century BCE.

Other monuments to the semi-divine hero Hercules also lay in this area. A great Altar is beneath this church and his club was preserved nearby too, in close proximity to the temples of the victorious generals.