



Buildings of ancient Rome

The Circus Flaminius

NARRATOR:

The temple of Hercules and the muses lay to the west and the colonnade surrounding it formed a facade continuous with the Porticus of Octavia. The temple was dedicated by Marcus Fulvius Nobilior after his triumph over the city of Ambracia in 187 BCE.

Nearby were more temples vowed in battle, or dedicated with the spoils of war. The temple of Castor and Pollux, the warrior horsemen who protected Rome, is known to be on the opposite side of the Circus Flaminius to the Porticus of Octavia. Its plan survives on a fragment of an ancient marble plan of the city of Rome. Other temples, of Vulcan, Hercules the Guardian, and Neptune, the remains of whose temple probably lie beside the temple of Hercules and the Muses, beneath this medieval house. Piety, Diana, and Mars the god of War also had their temples built near here.

All of these temples, dedicated to give thanks for victory, clustered together. Why? To be near the Circus of Flaminius. This was the military parade ground where triumphal processions mustered before setting off passing the temples on the banks of the Tiber, on through the forum to finish on the Capitoline Hill.

The porticus of Octavia lay along the northern side of the Circus of Flaminius which was the most important focus of warlike competition in the city of Rome. It was also the location of the plebeian games, and the assembly of the people was often held there. It therefore also served a political function. Yet another reason for the powerful families of Rome to make their mark nearby.

One such mark was the temple of Mars, although nothing survives above ground. This was the place where the censors officiated at the census, the climax of which was a sacrifice to Mars by the censor himself. The sacrifice was followed by a ritual purification of the army in the nearby circus. This temple was built by Decimus Junius Brutus Calliacus, descendant of the Junius Brutus who was the first consul of the new republic, in about 133 BCE. The marble temple, again built by Hermodoros of Salamis had walls inscribed with verses of the poet Accius glorifying the deeds of the nobility.