The first steps by Lancia and Alfa

The Lancia headquarters and workshop were opened on November 29, 1906 in a few buildings in Turin that had once belonged to Itala. Its founders were Vincenzo Lancia and Claudio Fogolin, a friend from Fiat and test driver Vincenzo was born in Fobello (Vercelli) on August 24, 1881 and was the third son of industrialist Giuseppe Lancia, who had run a solid, prosperous preserves company. Vincenzo's love for mechanics led to him being hired at the age of 16 in the Ceirano brothers' workshop (located on the first floor at Corso Vittorio Emanuele 9, home to the Lancia family) and participating in the creation of the Welleyes. His father did not approve of his career choice, having hoped his son would become a lawyer. But Vincenzo was very determined and when Fiat took over Ceirano and the related patents in 1899 for 30,000 Lira, it employed Vincenzo as a test driver. He later became an official racing driver as he was quite capable behind the wheel, so much so that in 1900 he won his first race, in Padua, and was generally among the front-runners in later races. But the podium didn't satisfy him, which brings us back to November 29, 1906, when Vincenzo and his friend Fogolin opened up their workshop at Via Ormea, ready to make their dreams come true and to create a vehicle bearing Vincenzo's name. He left Fiat but relations with Agnelli remained excellent, so much so that Giovanni gave the newly established company 50,000 Lira. A fire hindered production of the first vehicle, but in September of 1907 the Tipo 51, or Alfa 12 HP, was born. This model was not very large, but stood out for its elaborate mechanics and elevated specific hp, considering the 2.5L (2543 cc) fourcylinder engine produced 24 hp. Despite its contained size, the chassis could not be removed from the workshop, so Lancia and Fogolin had to widen the door with a pickaxe. This incident truly explains Lancia's passion and love for the automobile, as though that chassis were the center of the universe and nothing else mattered. The first vehicle already had a name in Greek letters that has always identified Lancia vehicles. Vincenzo's brother Giuseppe Lancia, an arts teacher and highly regarded Greek scholar, was responsible for this choice. From Limousines and Landaulets to double phaetons and two-seater race cars, Alfa stood out for its excellent performance and ease of handling without compromising on outfitting. This explains why most of the 108 units they manufactured were exported to the United States and Australia. As usual, quality was recognized. It is no coincidence that American millionaire John D. Rockefeller was seen driving a Lancia Theta, the flagship par excellence for on-board comfort and luxury as well as performance. The likes of Isotta Fraschini would be needed to create an alternative to the Turinese limousine.

But before Alfa terminated its cycle in 1909, Lancia proposed the Dialfa, a name taken from the Greek alphabet with the prefix "di" or "bi" (two or three times), used to indicate that the model was a subsequent version or destined to races. The Dialfa was characterized by its six-cylinder engine, which would not be used again on a Lancia for decades as performance by the fourcylinder was only slightly inferior. The desire to build excellent touring automobiles for the most demanding and wealthy clients forced Vincenzo Lancia to make a decision that perplexed many. He retired from racing and prohibited any official Lancia cars from participating in races. This was the same man who, when he was with Fiat, always won and who also did very well with his own cars. However, private individuals kept up the fame with victories that continued elevating the brand's reputation. Lancia presented the Beta, Gamma and Delta models, the sports models Didelta and Epsilon, Eta and Theta and the Zeta truck (which was also used in the military) before the start of World War I. These vehicles were equipped with many peculiarities and innovative features, which at times were even revolutionary. For example, the refined Theta was the first car in the world with a complete electrical system and metal wheels or spokes (rather than wooden). The Gamma was fast considering its weight, with a top speed of 68 mph (110 km/h), and was the best-selling model in this initial series (258 units were sold in 1910 alone). The 1911 Delta is remembered for being the first model manufactured in the large new Turinese factory at Via Monginevro (the factory was active until 1962, when the current one in Chivasso was opened), for its excellent brakes and high speeds (71 mph/115 km/h), which led to its sports version (Didelta).

52-53 Vincenzo Lancia behind the wheel of a Fiat 50 HP at the third running of the Targa Florio. It was held on 18 May 1908 at the Sicilian race on the Madonie Circuit and Lancia finished second.

53 An elegant Lancia Gamma 20 HP. It made its debut in 1911 and succeeded the 15-20 HP as the company's standard. A new evolved and improved model was released every year.