

there are no traces of public buildings beyond the original ones dating from the colony's foundation. They seem to have been content to pursue an unremarkable civic existence, untroubled by grand cultural or political pretensions.

4. *The Fall of Rome.*

For the first two centuries after its foundation, Augusta Taurinorum remained a provincial backwater, placid and unremarkable. This happy state of affairs would be brutally upset in the third century C.E, however, when civil war, economic recession, and barbarian incursions combined to threaten the empire's very existence. During the long crisis that tore apart the fabric of the empire after the death of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the Po valley became the front line of defense against successive waves of Germanic invaders who crossed the Alps seeking to penetrate the rich heartlands of the Italian peninsula. To counter this danger, the imperial capital was moved from Rome to Milan, so that the emperors would be able to respond quickly to incursions across the northern frontier. The waning of the Pax Romana forced Augusta Taurinorum, located in this dangerous frontier zone, into a new strategic role, confronting its citizens with threats they had never known before. A new, unsettled period now began in the history of this once quiet provincial city.

Through the third century, Augusta Taurinorum witnessed the periodic passage of armies on their way to suppress disorders and confront invasions, in Gaul and along the Alpine frontier. And although the tide of invasions was finally stemmed by the soldier-emperor Diocletian in the late third century, the political climate remained uncertain. Conflict over the imperial throne continued, despite Diocletian's attempt to lay down rules to ensure peaceful succession. In 311 the would-be emperor Constantine crossed the Alpine passes above Augusta Taurinorum and overcame a detachment of troops loyal to his rival Maxentius close by: he then marched on to defeat his rival at the Milvian Bridge just outside Rome, and win the imperial crown in the following year. Constantine and his successors managed to restore a degree of political stability to the empire, but this respite ended in the late fourth century. The fragile peace was shattered by waves of invasion and internal conflict that would finally extinguish the Roman empire in the west, leaving Italy in the hands of a succession of barbarian warlords, and radically transforming its economy and society.