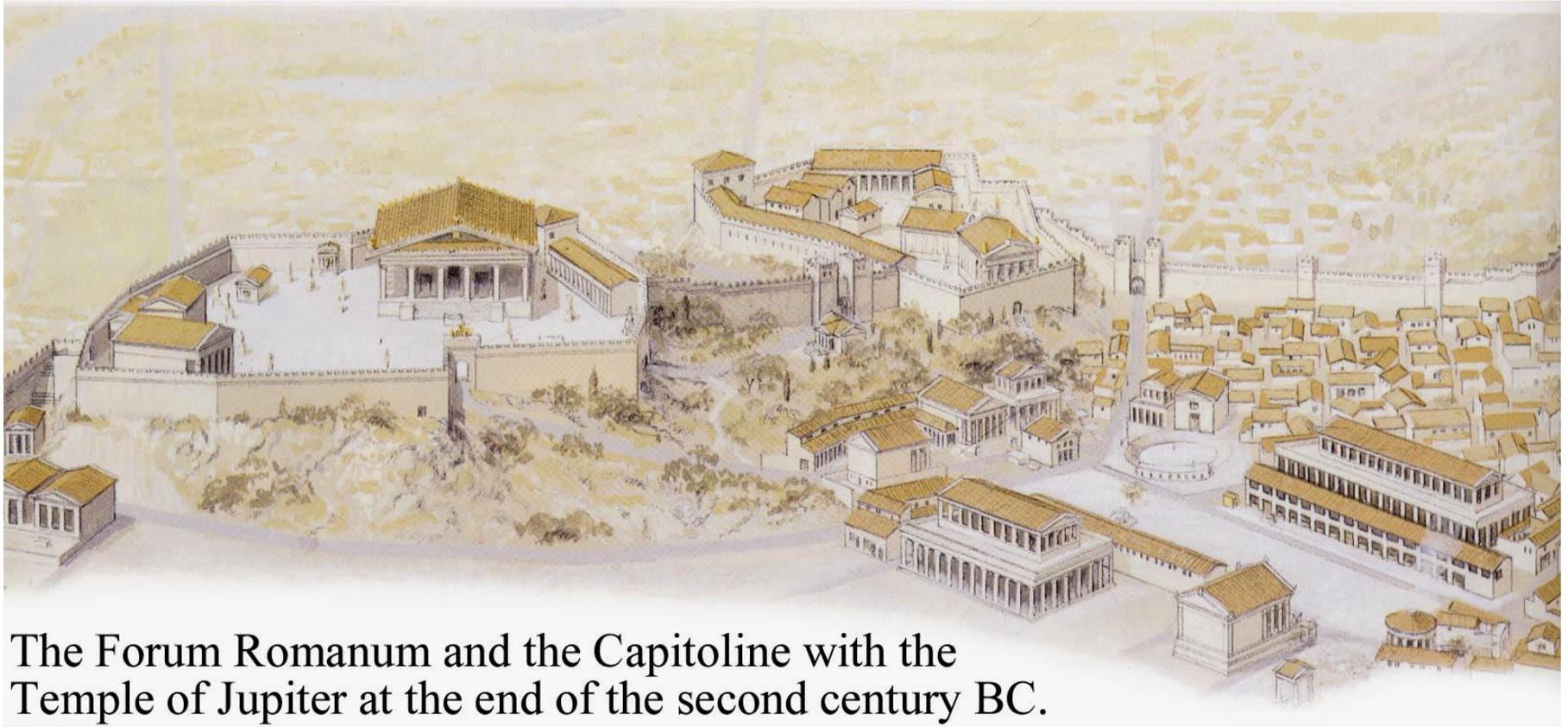


The Capitoline Hill and the Roman Forum



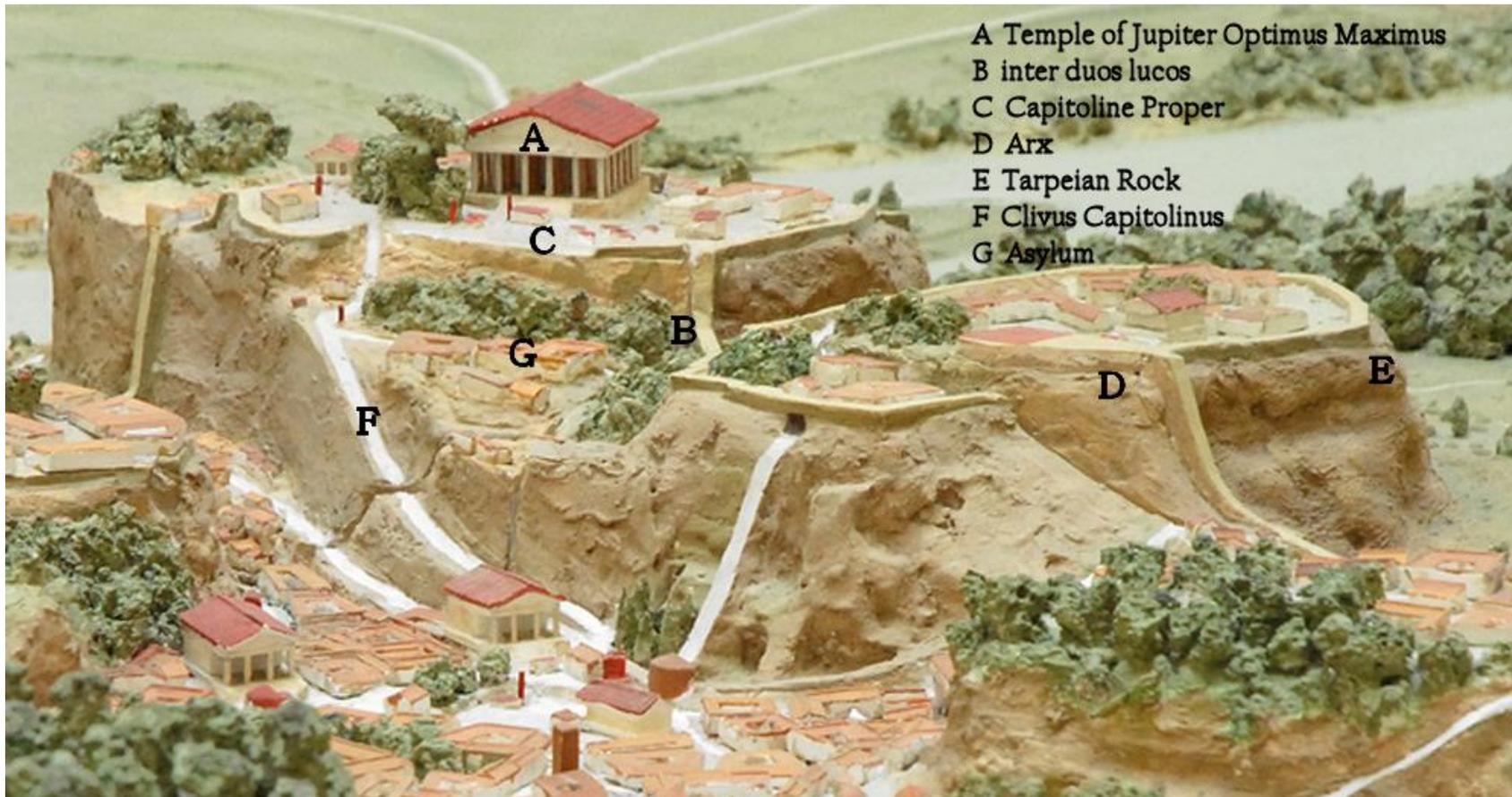
The Forum Romanum and the Capitoline with the Temple of Jupiter at the end of the second century BC.

With the construction of the Cloaca Maxima, completed under the Etruscan dynasty of the Tarquins, the last kings of Rome, the swampy valley which lay between the Capitoline, the Palatine and the slopes of the Esquiline Hill was drained and reclaimed and became the meeting-place of the inhabitants who lived on the surrounding hills. From that moment, the small valley became the *square* (the *forum*), the political, religious and commercial fulcrum of Rome: the Forum Romanum.

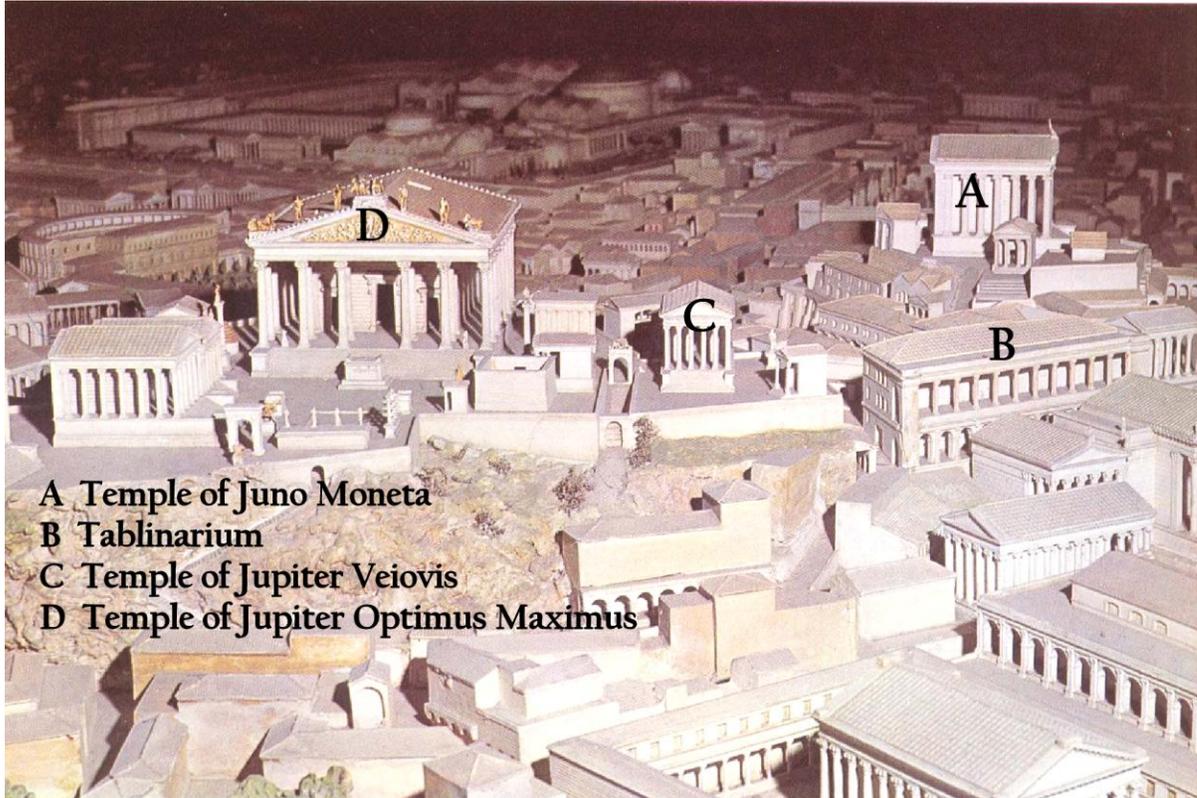
Processions, trials, triumphal ceremonies, political meetings and elections took place here, and in fact it was the nerve center of Republican Rome. But it was given its monumental appearance, for the most part, by Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius. It is difficult for someone looking at the ruins for the first time today to realize its importance: nevertheless, in this square, among what are now the ruins of basilicas and temples, honorary columns and triumphal arches, men with names like Sulla, Cato, Cicero, Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius and many others discussed and decided the destiny of Rome. In this square, the great adventure of the Romans, the adventure of our own civilization, had its beginnings.

The Capitoline Hill in the Early Republic

6th Century B.C.



The Capitoline at the time of the Emperor Domitian 82 A.D.



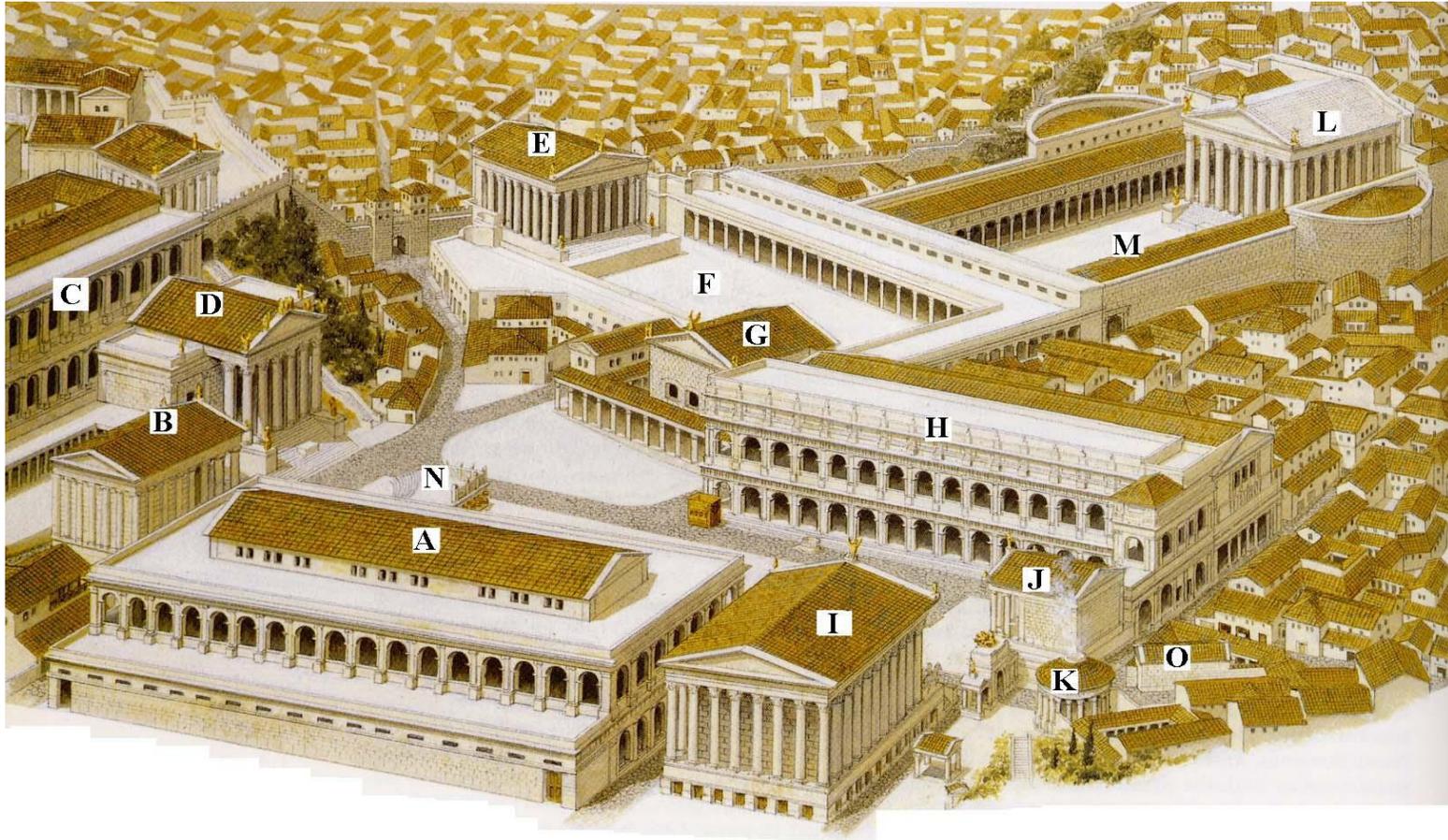
The **Capitoline Hill**, the smallest of the hills of Rome, consisted of two peaks, termed the **Capitoline proper** and the **Arx**. On the southern Capitoline was the tripartite temple of Jupiter **Optimus Maximus, Juno and Minerva**. Here consuls sacrificed at the beginning of the year, provincial governors took vows before leaving for their provinces and triumphal processions culminated with a sacrifice.

On the northern **Arx** was the temple of **Juno Moneta** (344 BC), which was used as a coin mint and is ultimately the source of our word “money”, the **auguraculum**, an augurs observation post and the **Tarpeian Rock**, from which condemned criminals were thrown to their deaths. In the col between the hills, called the “**inter dous lucos**” was the temple of **Veiovis**, which was associated with a form of Jupiter and linked closely to the Julian gens, and the **Asylum** associated with Romulus.

The east face of the hill was occupied by the massive **Tabularium**, the record office and the approach from the Forum, the “**Clivus Capitolinus**”.

Both the hill and the temple of Jupiter were reproduced in many of the cities of Italy and provinces. The right to erect such “**capitolia**” was at first probably reserved for Roman colonies.

The Forum Romanum in the Reign of Augustus 14 A.D.



A Basilica Julia
B Temple of Saturn
C Tablinarium
D Temple of Concord
E Temple of Venus Genetrix

F Forum of Julius Caesar
G Curia Julia (Senate)
H Basilica Aemilia
I Temple of Castor and Pollux
J Temple of the Deified Julius Caesar

K Temple of Vesta
L Temple of Mars Ultor
M Forum of Augustus
N Rostra
O Regia

A Basilica Julia: The Basilica Julia was begun by Julius Caesar in 54 B.C.. It replaced the Basilica Sempronia. It consisted of a rectangular structure with a two-story gallery around it. The façade on the Via Sacra had a two-story portico with barrel-vaults and half-columns attached to the pillars. Destroyed by a fire, it was rebuilt and enlarged by Augustus (12 A.D.); destroyed once more by the fire of Carinus (284 A.D.), it was restored by Diocletian (303 A.D.). Finally, it was destroyed still another time by the Goths led by Alaric (410 A.D.), and nothing remains of it except the paving. It was the seat of the administration of justice and the site of public meetings.

B Temple of Saturn: The Temple of Saturn stood on the clivus Capitolinus and served as a treasury. Of the early history of his festival nothing is known; Livy speaks as if it originated in 217 B.C. At most, some modification of the ritual, in the direction of hellenization, took place then. In historical times it was the merriest festival of the year, '*optimus dierum*', Slaves were allowed temporary liberty to do as they liked, presents were exchanged, particularly wax candles and little pottery images or dolls, *sigillaria*. There was also a sort of mock king, or Lord of Misrule, *Saturnalicius princeps*. By about the fourth century A.D. much of this was transferred to New-year's Day, and so became one of the elements of the traditional celebrations of Christmas.

C Tablinarium: Adjacent to the Temple of Saturn, the Tablinarium served as the main record office. It was built by Q. Lutatius Catulus in 78 B.C. and lies between the two summits of the Capitoline.

D Temple of Concord: This temple was dedicated to Concordia the personification of agreement between the Roman people. It was built by Camillus in 367 B.C.

E Temple of Venus Genetrix: Located in the Forum of Julius Caesar, this temple celebrated the Venus as the founder of the Julian gens.

F Forum of Julius Caesar: The Forum of Caesar was approved in 54 B.C. It had the form of an elongated rectangle (175 by 80 yards), and was surrounded by porticoes with booths. On the short side in front of the entrance stood the temple dedicated to Venus Genetrix. Almost square in form, this was an octastyle Corinthian temple, with a splendid lacunar ceiling. In the apse of the temple was the statue of the goddess by Archesilaus, a Greek sculptor of the neo-Attic school. There were also two statues of Caesar and one of Cleopatra.

Access to the temple was by stairs on the sides. The portico of the temple contained a rich collection of pictures by the most illustrious Greek painters, acquired or simply carried off by Caesar to adorn his Forum. Pliny mentions numerous works, among them one of Medea as she meditates the killing of her children and a portrait of Cleopatra. Also kept here were six chests of gems and a suit of armor made of precious metal. In front of the temple was a splendid fountain decorated with statues of nymphs by the neo-Attic school. Later, at the time of Trajan, the Basilica Argentaria was added, and the whole Forum underwent extensive restorations at the hands of Domitian, Trajan and Hadrian.

G Curia Julia (Senate): The origins of the *CURIA* are extremely ancient. Tradition has it that it dates back to Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome; it was destroyed and reconstructed at various times. Julius Caesar rebuilt it completely, moving it towards the ancient Comitium and changing its orientation. The brickwork building, which remains today, dates from the time of Diocletian (303 A.D.). The bronze doors were removed by Pope Alexander VII and placed on the main entrance of the

Basilica of St. John-in-Lateran. The interior of the Curia is rectangular in form (149 by 60 feet), and its walls were covered with marble slabs up to a certain height; above the marble decoration there were three niches on each side, decorated with small alabaster columns.

At the sides there were steps, which can still be seen, on which wooden seats were placed for the senators (about 300). The floor (the central part is still in a good state of preservation) consists of a marble inlay with porphyry and serpentine. In front of the entrance there must have been the altar on which the senators made sacrifices when entering the hall. On the wall opposite the entrance, there was a podium for the president and here, against the wall, was the statue of Victory. The Curia, seat of the Roman Senate, was the scene of the most decisive events in the history of Rome.

H Basilica Aemilia: The Basilica Aemilia was constructed in 179 B.C. by the consuls M. Aemilius Lepidus and Fulvius Nobilio. It was destroyed, only to be rebuilt, several times: in 14 B.C., in 22 A.D., and finally, by the Goths of Alaric, in 410 A.D. It was a splendid building, richly decorated with marble. It had a great portico on the front, with two orders in the Tuscan style, behind the portico there were 12 booths, six on each side of the central entranceway. It seems that at the time of Augustus the portico was removed from the structure of the basilica to form a self-contained building, which was consecrated to Gaius and Lucius Caesar, the adoptive sons of Augustus. Behind the booths was the great hall of the basilica, divided by marble columns into four aisles. The first was 17 feet wide, the main aisle or nave was 39 feet wide and 262 feet long, and then came the two minor aisles so that the basilica bordered on the Forum of Nerva.

I Temple of Castor and Pollux: The Temple of Castor and Pollux was consecrated on 1 January 484 B.C.; it was rebuilt many times in various ages, and the present-day remains, three splendid columns with trabeation, belong to the time of Tiberius (1st century A.D.). This temple is identified with the birth of the Roman Republic and stood next to the Fountain of Juturna, where according to the legend which has come down to us from Plutarch Castor and Pollux appeared to the Romans on horseback to announce the victory won by the people against the last king of Rome at Lake Regillo. As it was reconstructed by Tiberius (19 A.D.), the temple stood on a high podium with steps covered with marble on the front. In the pronaos there was a "mensa ponderaria" (weighing and measuring table), possibly used by the moneychangers and jewel merchants. In the temple were the statues of Castor and Pollux, which from the time of the construction of the temple dedicated to them were considered the guardians of Rome's liberty.

J Temple of the Deified Julius Caesar: Virtually closing off the south-eastern side of the square, was the Temple of Julius Caesar. Of this building, only the part forming the cement work, that is, the internal structure of the podium, has survived to our time; the entire upper, architectural part has disappeared. It had an Ionic, hexastyle (six-columned) pronaos. The podium did not have steps as was customary, but instead a wall projecting from the row of columns, which served as a platform for orators (Rostra Nova). In the wall of the podium were placed the rostra, which Augustus had seized from the ships of Mark Antony and Cleopatra in the famous Battle of Actium (31 B.C.).

The ruins, which can still be seen at the center of the niche in the podium, have been identified by recent studies as the Altar of Caesar. Here Mark Antony delivered the funeral oration in honor of Caesar. The words of Antony have been lost, but perhaps, given the inspired intuition of that great poet Shakespeare, we may be permitted to say that the words of the poet could have been the words of Antony:

"Friend, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones."

K Temple of Vesta: The Temple of Vesta, which stands slightly back from the square, is extremely ancient and was perhaps built by Numa Pompilius himself, the second king of Rome and the founder of the cult of Vesta. In this temple, the most important in the Forum and indeed in the city, the Vestal Virgins had custody of the Sacred Fire, symbol of the life of the city and therefore never allowed to go out. The temple was round, with an opening high up, similar to the primitive hut dwellings. It stood on a square base next to the House of the Vestals and was separated from the Regia, residence of the Pontifex, by a small street branching off the Via Sacra: the *Vicus Vestae*. The temple as we see it today, only a small part of the original, dates from the last restoration, carried out by order of the wife of Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, towards 204 A.D.

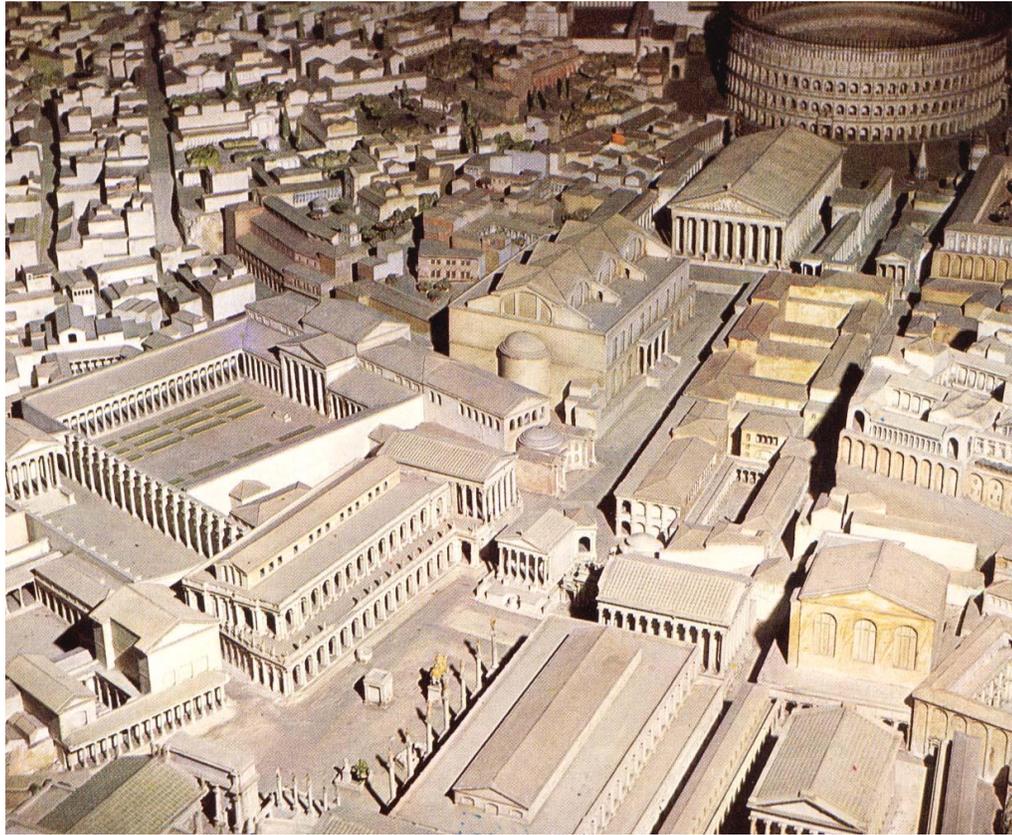
The Pontifex Maximus was considered the spiritual head of the Vestals, but at the same time he had no part in the practice of the cult, which was the exclusive duty of the six Vestal Virgins, chosen from among the noblest families of the city. These women had to take vows of chastity and continued to fulfill their duties for thirty years. The privileges enjoyed by the priestesses of Vesta were numerous, but the punishment inflicted if a Vestal failed in her duty or broke her vow of chastity was terrible: she was buried alive. Tragic and explicit is the description of the sentencing to death of a Vestal, which has come down to us from Plutarch: "The unfortunate guilty woman is carried on a funeral car, to which she is bound with straps of leather, through the Forum, the Vicus Longus and Alta Semita (High Path) as far as the Porta Collina. The crowd opens in silence to let the funeral procession pass: not a word is heard, not a single lament. Silent tears fall from the eyes of every spectator. Finally the procession reaches a point near the opening of a crypt, the high priest raises his arms towards the Gods, the unfortunate guilty woman descends by means of a ladder into the tomb. As soon as she has descended into the crypt, the ladder is removed, the opening is closed with a huge stone and a large quantity of earth is heaped over it so as to cancel all trace of the tragic site."

L Temple of Mars Ultor: (Mars the Vindicator) Built by Augustus in his forum to commemorate the victory over Julius Caesar's assassins.

M Forum of Augustus: Augustus continued the town-planning policy of Caesar, expropriating private houses between the Suburra zone and the Forum of Caesar, and here in 42 B.C. he began work on his Forum and on the Temple of Mars Ultor (Mars the Vindicator), as the emperor himself records in his autobiography. The works were paid for with the proceeds of war booty. The square of the Forum was rectangular in form (135 by 98 yards) and at the sides were two covered hemicycles, semispherical structures 100 feet high, with Corinthian columns and caryatids. Work continued on the Forum for many years and when it was inaugurated in 2 B.C. it was still uncompleted; in fact work continued for more than a century.

N Rostra: The *ROSTRA* constituted the platform from which the political orators spoke. It was given this name because the front of it was adorned by six bronze rostra, seized by the Romans from the ships at Antium during the Latin war (338 B.C.). The present situation of the rostra is that established by Julius Caesar, who placed them on the same axis as the square and the Julia and Aemilia Basilicas. Apart from the Rostra, two other podiums for political orators existed in the forum, these also equipped with rostra, one in front of the Temple of Pollux and Castor and the other in front of the Temple of Julius Caesar.

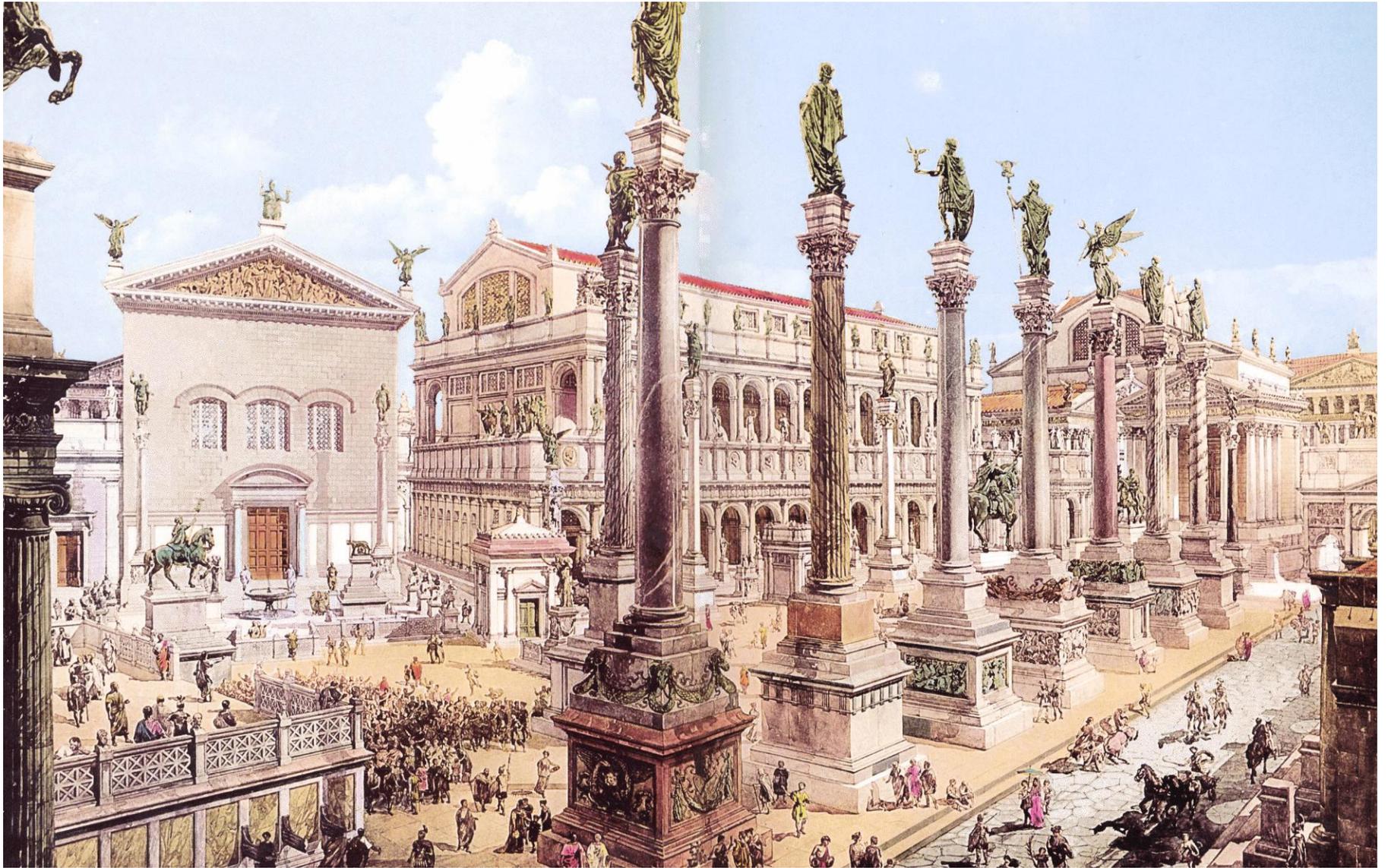
O Regia: The *Regia* was the traditional home of king Numa and was the seat of authority under the Republic of the Pontifex Maximus and contained his archives.



Model of the Roman Forum (east)



The Roman Forum today viewed from the Palatine Hill



Forum Romanum (east)



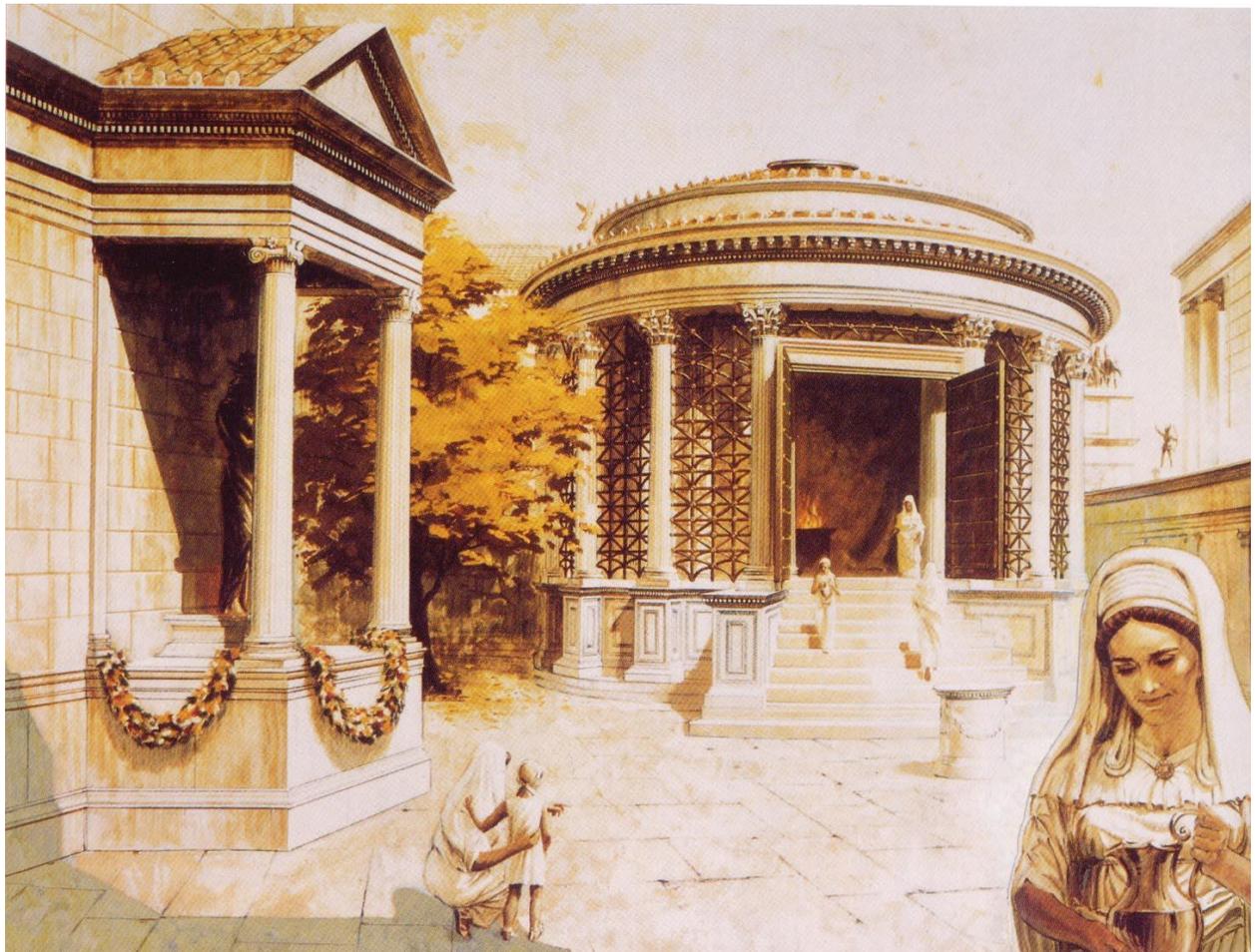
Forum Romanum (south)



Remains of the Temple of Vesta

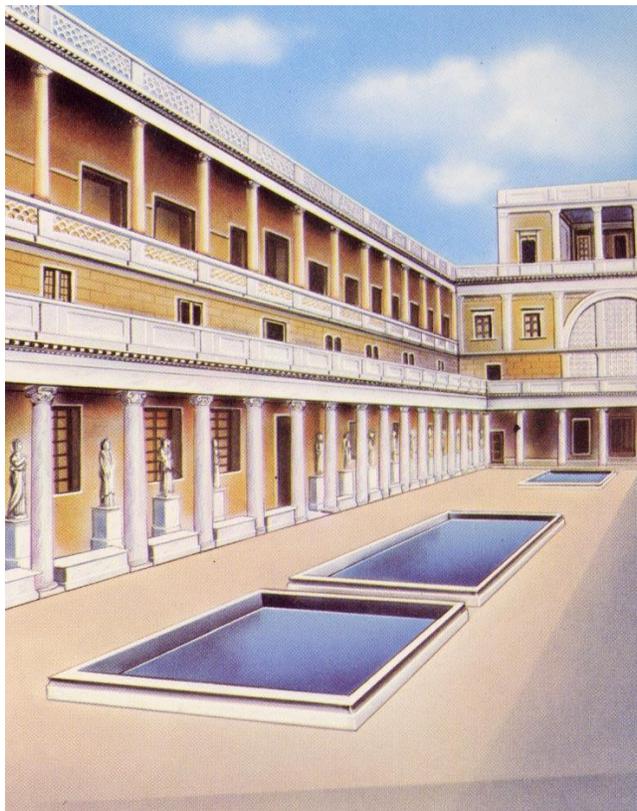


Recreation





Central garden of the House of the Vestal Virgins



Recreation of the Vestal Gardens



Statue of a Vestal Virgin



Reconstruction of the interior of the Julian Curia



Recreation of the Rostra



The Rostra Today



Recreation of the Curia Julia



The Curia Julia Today



Floor in the Curia Julia Today