



Eagle's Castle

FIVIZZANO

Location: Located high on a hill, the Castel dell'Aquila overlooks the medieval village of Gragnola at the confluence of the streams Aulella and Lucido, which are flanked by roads connecting the Lunigiana and Garfagnana. The name of the fortification (Aquila meaning Eagle) derives from its elevated position on the watershed of the two streams.

Type of castle: Castle with Marquis' seat in a fortified village.

Construction period: 16th century.

First appearance in historical sources: The name Gragnola is mentioned in documents dated 1162, located in the monastery of Monte dei Bianchi. Gragnola once belonged to the Bianchi de Herberia, lords of this territory, and then came into the possession of the Malaspinas of Filattiera. According to some historians, Gragnola seems to be Forum Clodi, a locality mentioned in the Tabula Peutingeriana, an ancient road map showing the road network in the Roman Empire. In accordance with the testament of Spinetta the Great of Verrucola, Gragnola passed to the Fosdinovo fief. In 1366, it became an independent fief and was named after the Castel dell'Aquila.





Eagle's Castle

FIVIZZANO

Strategic role: The fortified settlement was built on the hill to control transits from Central Europe to Rome during the medieval period, when Gragnola was a crossing point for trade and travel.

Further in use: The castle was abandoned and left in ruins for more than a century, until it was acquired by private owners in 1996 and restored in several phases after detailed studies. The restoration involved not only the castle but also its big tower, which had largely fallen down but is still recognisable in pictures dating back to 1927. Today, the castle hosts social and cultural events.

Current condition: Restored.

Viewing: The castle is open to visitors. For further information please visit www.castellodellaquila.it

Dark events: The skeleton of a knight who was killed between 1310 and 1390 was found during the restoration works. He was shot with a type of crossbow bolt that was used in Tuscany since the 30-40s of the 14th century. Thanks to this discovery, it was possible to carry out a unique archaeological and anthropological study.

History: The independent fief of Castel dell'Aquila was established in 1366 by Galeotto of Fosdinovo, who was then succeeded by his son Leonardo.

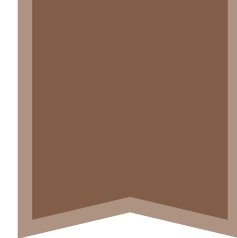
Leonardo Malaspina stood out in the political circles of his time mainly for his military and political strength and he was in contact with many signories in northern Italy.

Conversely, Leonardo's two sons, Galeotto I and Leonardo II, fell into disrepute. In order to extend their power in the Lunigiana, in 1418 they ordered the slaughter of the Marquises of Verrucola, to whom they were related, keeping alive just the young Spinetta III and one daughter, who then got married to one of the brothers.

The servants reacted by asking the intervention of the Florence Republic, which took over Castel dell'Aquila. In 1423, it went back to the former lords, who were under the protection of Florence. When the dynasty died out in 1443, the fief passed once again to Fosdinovo. In 1462, however, it regained its independence, maintaining it despite internal divisions until 1646.

In that year, despite the opposition of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, testamentary heir of the last Marquis, it was re-annexed to Fosdinovo by imperial order, and ended up sharing the same fate. In 1938, the former fief was incorporated into the Municipality of Fivizzano.

The castle was frequented and inhabited until the end of the Malaspina dynasty; then, it was abandoned until the end of the 20th century.



Eagle's Castle

FIVIZZANO

Structure: The castle comprises several main structures around an inner courtyard. Four vast residential spaces can be identified: the oldest are provided with defensive elements, such as embrasures and elevated entrances. There is also a chapel. The courtyard is enclosed by a curtain wall where it is possible to recognise a quadrangular flanking tower, which is part of the old fortified perimeter, a ravelin and a wide entrance-way once used by knights. The construction was built between the 13th and 16th century. construction was built between the 13th and 16th century.