



The Castle of Malgrate

VILLAGGIO IN LUNIGIANA

Location: The castle stands in the municipality of Villafranca, on a hill overlooking the Bagnone river valley, tributary of the Magra River. Due to its magnificence, it remains one of the most attractive spots of Lunigiana, as does the small village.

Type of castle: Enclosure with tower and feudal residence.

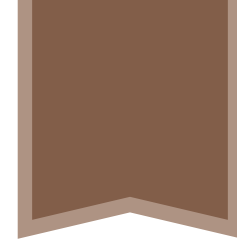
Construction period: 14th century.

First appearance in historical sources: In 1351, at the time of the division of the inheritance of the Marquis of Filattiera Nicolò I Malaspina among his five sons. Filattiera was assigned to Opizzino, Treschietto to Giovanni, Castiglione del Terziere to Franceschino, Bagnone to Antonio and Malgrate to Bernabò, which became the capital of the small fief.

Strategic role: Control of the plain below, which was an intersection of several paths.

Further use: In the middle of the 19th century: a plan shows it as intact and active.





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Current condition: The State acquired it in a ruined condition and then restored it, thanks to the Structural Funds of the European Union and to the funds of the Castelli della Lunigiana special project.

Viewing: Open to the public.

History: The origin of the castle of Malgrate dates back to the 14th century, in the same period as the foundation of the Malaspina fief. In 1351, the five sons split the fief: Bernabò's fief included two fortified territories (Malgrate and Filetto), four villages and two farmhouses. Bernabò's dynasty lasted seven generations: the descendants kept this territory for two and a half centuries. They passed from quiet times with political agreement to troubled events due to the greed of Florence and Milan, who wanted to rule Lunigiana. This alternation lasted until the feud was sold to the Duchy of Milan, and then sold again to the Ariberti di Cremona, whose dynasty kept the fief until the French Revolution.

A plan of 1852 shows it still intact, except for some rooms on the third floor, the roof of which was partially destroyed. After having been abandoned and dismantled, the building crumbled almost entirely, until it was restored in recent times.

Structure: Post-medieval, trapezoidal defensive walls surround the medieval, rectangular core.

The medieval core consisted of a residence that certainly existed between the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 15th century. The feudal abode is similar to other residences of the Malaspina.

On the eastern side there is the medieval, cylindrical tower, which probably preceded the palace's construction. The tower has a minimum height of 25 m and has six rooms with overlapped vaulted ceilings.

Around the middle of the 15th century, the castle's defensive walls were strengthened: the works were directed by Master Piero Picheto, who worked in other Malaspina fiefs in the Magra valley.

The nineteenth-century plan minutely describes the environments and the uses of every room.