



The Castle of Virgoletta

VILLAFRANCA IN LUNIGIANA

Location: The castle stands on a hill in the Bagnone valley, which is composed of alluvial deposits. It is a sort of geomorphologic “wart”, which favours the building of defensive structures.

Type of castle: Castle.

Construction period: 12th century.

First appearance in historical sources: In 1077, as a property of the Estensi. As the shape of the hill where it is located recalls a wart (in Italian: verruca), the structure was called Verrucola, then Verrucoletta, and finally Virgoletta.

Strategic role: Control of the ancient road which was an alternative way to the Magra Route, with the roads leading to the Apennines along the River Bagnone valley.

Further in use: At the beginning of the 19th century.

Current condition: The current owners restored the inner rooms.





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Viewing: Private ownership.

History: It was once the headquarters of the Corbellari family, but then passed to the Malaspina in the 13th century. It was part of the Filattiera fief, and in 1275 it was assigned to Alberto, together with Castiglione and other territories of the Bagnone valley. At the beginning of the 14th century it belonged to the Marquis of Villafranca, and between 1449 and 1471 to Galeotto Campofregoso.

After his death – caused by the Marquis of Bagnone - the Malaspina recovered the property for the entire 16th century, and made fine architectural changes.

It was Federico II Malaspina – Lord of Virgoletta and Villafranca – who completed the works and placed his coat of arms, which is visible on the castle's entrance. The last Marquis of Virgoletta was Giovanni Malaspina, who kept it until 1796. After the restoration it became part of the Duchy of Modena until 1849, and then of the Duchy of Parma, until the unification of Italy.

During the last World War, as Virgoletta stood on the Gothic Line, the castle became the headquarters of a German command, and the archives and all the furniture were burnt. Other damage was caused by internal splits among the inhabitants, by negligence and by abusive adjustments during the second half of the 20th century.

Structure: Virgoletta Castle consists of a quadrilateral tower with defensive walls located on Vignale Hill. The original core expanded during the centuries along the longest side of the hill, organizing all other buildings into an inner courtyard. From 1453, Galeotto Campofregoso started to transform the feudal manor, and this was completed by Federico II Malaspina during the 16th century. He refined the castle's shape and created the inner loggia in the courtyard and the spacious salons of the principal, or noble, floor.

The structure was modified several times during the centuries, and nowadays it has a residential function.