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## ROCCA di VIGNOLA

Piazza dei Contrari, 4  
41058 Vignola (MO)



FONDAZIONE  
di VIGNOLA



## ROCCA di VIGNOLA

*hidden worlds*



True happiness finds its deep roots in a past period that lives again in a day-dream of an ancient manor, as the one you are about to step into, its endless corners and innumerable rooms decorated with six-century old frescoes, climbing the steep stairways of the towers, striding back and forth the walkways and lingering in the soldiers' bare billets will not only make you feel an actual historian but also an inspired poet, as anyone is always keen on giving heed to emotions.

The colourful arabic bestiary, depicted in the hall on the ground and first floor, repeats itself on the walls, while the vaults seem to endlessly reflect that stunningly beautiful work of art. What is the mysterious reason - which surely lied outside of simple aesthetic decoration - that prompted the creation of such frescoes in a noble mansion nestled among scowling towers? Maybe the noble families' coats of arms, the architectural decorations themselves, the flowers and the floral patterns narrate a tale without words, even the mottoes written on the cartouche are enigmas which subside stones of virtue, political choices, military ventures the stones hidden behind each fresco will go hand in hand with the subtle thrill of meeting common people lived and walked through this ancient castle, looked at the painted walls and saints, bishops, generals, warlords, artists, travellers, architects, soldiers, prisoners and what previous visitors had admired and understood centuries before. Princes, dukes, lords' goods, the fortress abolished. All the feudal Boncompagni-Ludovisi family loses all their feudal rights With the arrival of the French the Boncompagni-Ludovisi family are discovered in 1906. After the First World War, Prince Boncompagni-Ludovisi starts the first renovations that would go on until the 1930s. A year before, the fortress has been declared a national monument.

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The family Boncompagni-Ludovisi transfers the castle to the Cassa di Risparmio di Vignola (the Bank of Vignola) which acquires the property of the fortress.

The castle is the most important and loved symbol of identity. From a very young age they perceive it as a living dream, drawing and colouring it as a fantastic, mysterious, protective entity that is always ready to offer several stories to unveil. Such a deep affection produces both the pride and coming back, because the journey never ends: there is always a new detail or enigma waiting to be revealed.

### THE MARQUISATE



### THE NAPOLEONIC GOVERNMENT



### TRANSFER OF THE CASTLE



### TODAY

the discovery of the fortress of Vignola

1575

1577

1796

1907

1965

1998

### THE BONCOMPAGNI AGE BEGINS



Alfonso II d'Este sells the Marquisate of Vignola to Giacomo Boncompagni, a noble from Bologna, legitimated child of Pope Gregorio XIII.

### RESTORATION OF THE FRESCOS



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### THE FONDAZIONE DI VIGNOLA



The Cassa di Risparmio transfers the ownership of the castle to the Fondazione di Vignola (Foundation of Vignola), a no profit organisation with a vocation for a better management and valorisation of the Castle of Vignola.

### THE SHIRE



Borso d'Este, duke of Ferrara, gives the fief of Vignola the title of county. Nicolò and Ambrogio Contrari, sons of Uguccione Contrari, Counts.

### THE CONTRARI AGE BEGINS



Nicolò III d'Este gives the fortress Uguccione Contrari, a noble from Ferrara. In 1409 Uguccione obtains the status of landlord of Montestino and Savignano (two castles near Vignola).

### THE SIGNORIA OF OBIZZO III



Obizzo III d'Este, Sir of Ferrara, becomes Sir of Modena as well, and he extends his domain over the fortress of Vignola.

1453

1420

1401

1396

1336

### NEW PAINTED FORTRESS



In 1420 ends the work to enlarge the fortress, started by Uguccione Contrari. The castle, painted on the outside, hosts the feudal lord. His rooms are finely decorated and the Chapel is elegantly painted with a cycle of frescoes illustrating the story of Christ and the Virgin.

### THE RETURN OF THE ESTE



Giovanni da Barbiano, with the support of the castle army of the Este family, gains control of the castle and the fortress. In 1399 the reconquers Vignola.

### ORIGINS



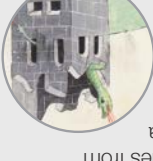
According to tradition, in this period a first fortress is built by the side of Panaro river. Around this building flourishes today the town of Vignola.

### FIRST EVIDENCE



The first known document that certifies the presence of a fortress in the castle of Vignola is dated 1178.

### KING ENZO FIRES THE FORTRESS



During the conflict between the Guelphs from Bologna and the Ghibellines from Modena, the fortress of Vignola is set on fire by King Enzo, son of the Emperor Frederick II. Gherardo Grassano builds the castle again and decides to live there with other exiled Ghibellines.

VIII cen. A.D.

IX cen. A.D.

1178

1227

1247

THE BISHOP DOMINATION

The castle of Vignola, along with the castle of Savignano, is under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Modena.

THE MUNICIPALITY DOMINATION

The town of Vignola goes under the rule of the municipality of Modena.

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- bookshop
- audio guide (English, French, German, Spanish)
- toilets
- only ground floor accessible for disabled people
- public car parks available nearby

15

#### The clock Tower

This tower was the main entrance to Vignola in the Early Middle Ages (Castelvecchio) and it had two drawbridges. The automated clock was placed on the tower in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

14

#### The ancient market loggia In the Contrari square

The loggia, built during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, hosted the chestnut markets coming from the Apennines - meant for the Padanian cities - and the silkworms cocoons, processed by the silken industries in Bologna. Under the colonnade there was a sundial dating back to 1852.

13

#### Barozzi Palace

Around 1560, by the will of Ercole Contrari *the Elder* and following the project of a great architect from Vignola, Giacomo Barozzi (called *il Vignola*) an entire medieval block was demolished to make room for the palace, new residence of the lords.

1

#### Entrances and Ravelin

The fortress has got two sequential entrances, which originally had a drawbridge. Between these ones stands the Ravelin and behind the second archway stands a second fortified tower used to defend the vault that faces the courtyard.

2

#### Contrari Chapel (1<sup>st</sup> floor )

Among the rooms of the lord's apartment, a late-gothic Italian jewel is nestled inside the walls: the Chapel of Ugucione Contrari. It is adorned with precious 15<sup>th</sup>-century frescoes, dedicated to the History of Christ and of the Virgin Mary.

3

#### Rocchetta

This place was used to stock pieces of artillery, war machines, crossbows, bows and arrows and food supplies (corned beef, wheat, wine, olive oil) for the garrison guarding the Fortress.

4

#### Nonantolana Tower

Built around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was elevated and enlarged during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the first years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century it started looking like the way we now know it, that is, with the upper part entirely built with bricks. It was the dungeon of the Fortress, the last defence, hosting Ugucione Contrari's study and the prisons, among which the one anciently called of the mill, because of its proximity to the underlying mill of Pusterla.

5

#### Women's Tower

Built in the first two decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century upon ancient fortifications, it derives its name from the presence of prisons only used for women.

6

#### Soldiers rooms and the walkways

The rustic rooms, near the walkways, hosted the garrison's soldiers.

7

#### Frescoed Halls (1<sup>st</sup> floor ) (Dames, Pavilion, Dogs, Coats of Arms, Tree Trunks)

The rooms on the main floor hosted the lords' private lives, whose family affairs inspired the decorations of the halls.

8

#### Frescoed Halls (ground floor) (Lions and Leopards, Doves, Rings)

Here, the public life of the feudal court took place. The painted coats of arms and the symbols (Lion, Leopard, Dove and Rings) belong to the noble families that owned the Fortress between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Contrari, Estensi, Boncompagni and Boncompagni-Ludovisi).

9

#### The Half Tower

The remains of the tower prove that the first Fortress dates back the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

10

#### Pusterla

The defences, formed by a small entrance (pusterla, from the latin "narrow door") protected by a small advanced tower, was used till the 17<sup>th</sup> century as emergency exit and entrance in case of siege.

12

#### The Moat

The excavating started around 1416, while the bastion was built after. The entire structure incorporated some of the buildings of the medieval village built around the first Fortress.

11

#### Brush Tower

Built between 1415 and 1419, it derives its name from the presence - until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - of a sentry box placed on the top of the roof. During the Risorgimento (first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) it was used as jail for political prisoners and as the house of their keeper.

