



PETER MICHAEL
 —————> WINERY <—————

A TOAST TO KNIGHTS VALLEY HISTORY

Knights Valley occupies the remote northeast corner of Sonoma County, dwarfed by Alexander Valley to the northwest, and the Napa Valley to the southeast. Mt. St. Helena can be seen from much of Sonoma and Napa counties, but from Knights Valley it towers overhead.

The beautiful valley and imposing mountain have always attracted settlers: the Wappo tribe arrived at least

four thousand years ago, then the Spanish, followed by other Europeans. Peter Michael Winery owes its favored position here, rooted in prized rhyolitic soil and enjoying one of the best wine-growing climates on earth, not only to geographic and geologic forces, but to the people who came before us.

Despite its relative youth and volcanic rock, Mt. St. Helena is not a volcano. Geologists believe that a wide



I S S U E X X

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Knights Valley from the Slopes of Mt. St. Helena, 1873 —by *Virgil Williams*. As Director of the new San Francisco School of Design, he was a major influence on early-California painting. He had a retreat cottage/ studio in Knights Valley.



FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO, GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. J. BURGESS JAMIESON AND AMERICAN ART DEACCESSION FUNDS, 1997.29

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Mt. St. Helena

HISTORY

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spread system of fissures and vents laid down heavy layers of volcanic materials (topped by St. Helena Rhyolite), and later faulting raised the mountain. Along with volcanic soil prized by winegrowers, the volcanic vents distilled and deposited valuable elements that attracted miners, and created hot springs that warmed the

imaginings of entrepreneurs.

This area was farmed for at least four thousand years by the “Mutistul,” one of three sub-groups of the Wappo, the longest continuously inhabiting Native American tribe in California. Mount St. Helena was known to this tribe as Kana’ mota or Human Mountain. Farming for the Wappo featured a respectful management of resources.

Two intersecting trails were known to have been used by the Wappo. One trail came down the Ida Clayton ridge and ended at the Pacific coast where the Wappo gathered salt, seaweed and seashells. The other trail traversed from the southern end of the Napa Valley to the geysers in the north. The two trails crossed near the site of Peter Michael Winery.

In 1843, a 17,742-acre land grant was given to Jose de los Santos Berryessa by the Mexican Governor Micheltoreno. Most of Malacomes Valley and Calistoga (then known as Agua Caliente), was within this grant. Malacomes Valley became Berryessa’s private hunting preserve where he built an adobe hunting lodge that remains to this day. Thomas Knight, a participant in the Bear Flag Revolt at Sonoma, bought a large portion of Malacomes Rancho from Berryessa in 1853. Malacomes Valley would later be renamed “Knights Valley.”

Calvin Holmes and his brother Henderson had come to California from Arkansas to make their fortunes in the ‘49 gold rush. Finding almost no gold, they turned to

freighting mining supplies and then to driving cattle from Texas, saving enough money to buy the present-day Cloverleaf Ranch and Fountaingrove areas north of Santa Rosa. In Texas Calvin met and married Ella—Elvira Eliza Huffman, and she gamely accompanied him to California along with 43 men and a herd of cattle. Around 1858, Calvin Holmes began purchasing land in Knights Valley.

At that time, rumors of silver were sending hordes of hopeful prospectors to the slopes of Mt. St. Helena. The ore they brought into Napa was pronounced worthless, but in 1860 red rock being thrown away down the hill was discovered to be cinnabar. The Ida Clayton and the Yellowjacket mines were located in Knights Valley, and were among the earlier attempts to mine cinnabar. They were owned by real estate moguls Giles Pease Kellogg and W.A. Stuart who built a toll road to the mines, and named it Ida Clayton for the local schoolteacher.

Though the Yellowjacket mine was the more successful of the two, it became known as the location of a famous murder rather than of riches. Eadweard Muybridge was well known as a photographer in San Francisco even before producing his pioneering motion studies. Muybridge discovered through letters sent to his much younger wife that their son had actually been fathered by her lover, Harry Larkyns. On October 17, 1874, Muybridge followed Larkyns to a house near the Yellowjacket mine and shot him. Muybridge was acquitted at his trial, as that sort of thing was expected of outraged husbands.

The Ida Clayton toll road was extended to the more successful Great Western Mine in 1875. Andrew Rocca, superintendent of Great Western, often drove the miners’ payroll from Calistoga the long way, by the Ida Clayton toll road. This was a not-always-successful attempt to avoid Buck English and other less infamous robbers lurking along the more direct Lawley toll road. Silver was later discovered in the ‘70s on the southeast side of Mt. St. Helena, but mining petered out at the turn of the century. In 1916 the Ida Clayton Toll Road became public, but with no mining traffic it was little used.



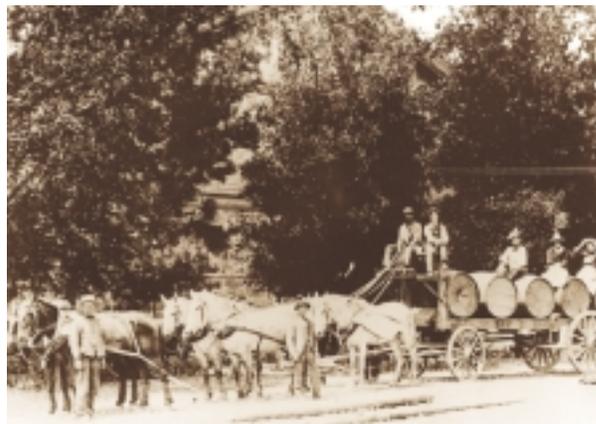
FROM THE NEW HISTORICAL ATLAS OF SONOMA COUNTY, ILLUSTRATED, 1877, THOMAS H. THOMPSON & CO.



In the 1870s mining was still considered to have a bright future in Knights Valley, and gave rise to land speculation. In an attempt to recoup losses from the toll road, Giles Kellogg, W.A. Stuart and Charles Laird began building a small resort town modeled after Calistoga. The town, which was called Kellogg, included the area from the Berryessa Adobe to the intersection of Ida Clayton Road and Highway 128. At one time, the town consisted of a general store, a school, several cottages, summer cabins, a hotel and winery. Avenues and lots were laid out, and plots advertised with great hyperbole. But railroad lines were never laid to the town, and it never developed into the vision held by Kellogg.

Meanwhile, Calvin Holmes continued to expand his purchases, buying the failed town of Kellogg and other properties, until he owned most of the northern portion of the valley.

In the 1870s and '80s, Holmes' ranch included hundreds of acres in wheat and large flocks of Merino sheep. Holmes also planted vineyards and was an early supplier to vintner Charles Krug of St. Helena. Even a voracious plague of grasshoppers in 1885 proved just a temporary setback. Elvira and Calvin built a large Second Empire Victorian house in 1878 that stands to this day. The original Sugarloaf Ranch house, now a residence of the Michaels', was built by the



Calvin Hall Holmes and his wife, Elvira Eliza Holmes (above, left) were California pioneers who turned their "Malacomes Rancho" in Knights Valley (left) into a prosperous estate known for gala parties and dances.

Descendants of the Folker family, whose winery wagon is shown above, still live in Knights Valley.

Holmes' in 1887 for their son, William, and his new bride Jennie Shattuck. For half a century, until 1939, several generations of the Holmes family prospered here.

By 1912, the leading crop in Knights Valley was grapes. Three wineries, Hood, Folker and Delafield had been established in the late 1800s, and Delafield's career included three gold medals. Unfortunately, prohibition and then grapevine diseases ended Delafield's grape growing career. In 1939 the ranch was sold and over the next forty years it passed through several hands before Sir Peter and Lady Michael purchased the ranch in 1982. By then, very little remained of the town of Kellogg. A large fire in 1964 burned most of Kellogg. Another fire in '68 destroyed the Post Office and general store, leaving only a winery, the Adobe and the two houses built by Calvin and Elvira Holmes.

Knights Valley has not changed dramatically since the turn of the century. Wildlife are still prevalent. Vineyards grow on the valley floor and lower foothills interspersed by cattle ranches and fruit orchards. There are no mines, no towns and no shopping centers. The rugged, upper mountain slopes remain beautiful and pristine. ■

2001: A TRULY WONDERFUL VINTAGE

by Luc Morlet, Winemaker

A CHALLENGING GROWING SEASON

In 2001 we were both plagued and blessed by a "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" growing season, in which the weather varied wildly, but ultimately created one of Peter Michael Winery's most flavorful crops ever.

After an unseasonably dry winter, the growing season began early. Bud break was observed in Mid-March, a month of very low temperatures, hitting the primary buds of the early Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Cabernet Franc vines. Javier Aviña and his vineyard crew spent many long nights fighting against this threat with wind machines in Les Pavots and Belle Côte vineyards. This was the first major frost in California in 30 years! The damage was noticeable. We were lucky that the secondary buds in the frosted areas were not hit, and grew quickly, which secured a tiny crop and the pruning wood necessary for next year.

During the first week of May, while the newly formed shoots were just starting to become stronger and recuperate from the frost, they were hit by a very strong offshore wind. It blew for four full days and nights, and severely damaged several blocks of La Carrière. Many shoots either entirely broke, or had their tips broken by the wires. Again, the crop potential dropped in those blocks.

In May and June we witnessed some incredibly high temperatures during the critical blooming season. The heat wave caused a light to medium berry set. On May 30, an unusual calamity hit the newly planted vineyard, Ma Belle-Fille. A fire, started on a neighboring property, burned out of control, and damaged the surrounding forest. Both our own crew and the Knights Valley firefighters worked diligently to lessen the fire's damage. They did an outstanding job, and the heat generated by the fire scorched the leaves of only three hundred vines.

The weather then suddenly cooled off to become one of the coldest Julys in history. This helped put the vines

2002 SPRING RELEASE

Winemaker's tasting notes



2000 L'APRÈS-MIDI *Estate Vineyard*

The 2000 L'Après-Midi Sauvignon Blanc offers a vibrant and intense bouquet of juniper berry and goose berry with an influence of peppery-spice. The balanced and crisp palate features an array of intense citrus fruits from grapefruit to orange, establishing a superb and long finish. Enjoyable now through the next 3 years.



2000 BELLE CÔTE *Estate Vineyard*

The 2000 Belle Côte shows off intensely exotic aromas of rose, lychee and orange peel, while offering candied pear and citrus oils in the mouth. The round and smooth palate finishes as exotically as it starts. This Chardonnay will age well for 4-5 years.



2000 LA CARRIÈRE *Estate Vineyard*

The 2000 La Carrière Chardonnay initially shows its delicate minerality and grilled nut character, and later reveals elements of lemon-lime citrus, kiwi fruit, and white flowers. The nose carries through to a soft and round palate with lingering notes of toasty oak. To be cellared for 3 years.



1999 LES PAVOTS *Estate Vineyard*

This classic Bordeaux blend shows aromas of cassia, blueberry, lavender and coffee with oak nuances of cedar and tobacco. Rich, ripe fruit impressions on the palate accentuated by silky, yet assertive tannins. The 1999 possesses balance, full body, concentrated extract and a fine finish. Les Pavots is a fusion of traditional French and neo-classical Californian winemaking techniques. The wine is ready for near term enjoyment and has the richness, extract and structure for 5 - 7 more years of aging.

2001: A TRULY WONDERFUL VINTAGE

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back on track. Due to some sporadic heat spikes, the berries continued to shrink and the sugars surpassed the flavors for a while. Javier and I worked together to manage the irrigation to respond correctly to the needs of the vines. In September, the situation became reversed.

We had morning fog, which burned off around 10:00 am, followed by nice daytime temperatures. We experienced what some viticulturists call "a viticultural moment of silence." This coincided with the arrival of one of the loudest and longest lightning storms I have witnessed.

Harvesting the grapes from each varietal was done on a block by block basis, and quite often zone by zone. During the heat wave, picking at cool temperatures was crucial to the flavors and overall quality of the fruit. The vineyard crew courageously picked at nighttime using portable lights and a generator. A final moderate heat spike helped to complete the ripeness of the last Cabernet Sauvignon block of Les Pavots, which was picked on October 15.

EFFORTS WERE MADE BY EVERYONE

2001 was a year in which winemaking efforts were truly made in the vineyards; however, there were still many challenges on the crush pad and during fermentation. The sorting of fruit cluster by cluster included the removal of some sunburned and raisin-like berries. Tonnage and juice yield off



the presses turned out to be even lower than expected, giving the juice a great deal of concentration. The yeasts, all natural at Peter Michael Winery, were very proficient and needed to be well taken care of because of the high level of sugar. In 2001 we noticed a rare phenomenon of stagnation of the sugar content of the

must during the alcoholic fermentation, despite very healthy fermentation activities. The pump-overs during the maceration created a leaching of the sugar from the most concentrated berries. This compensated for the disappearance of the fermented sugar. While this phenomenon could have caused a great deal of anxiety, I fortunately remembered a similar situation with the very ripe 1997 vintage. The great quality of the tannins allowed us to extend the maceration, which averaged thirty-five days, to a record of fifty-three days!

Post-fermentation, we discovered our Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc wines to be precociously aromatic and highly intense with an excellent level of acidity and a great balance. At our New Year's tasting, we confirmed that each lot was amazingly expressive of individual terroirs. Furthermore, the red wines are very concentrated in color, tannin, and flavor and are already displaying silky tannins.

These 2001 wines are definitely destined for graceful long lives. This will be a vintage to enjoy and to keep for decades! It is comparable to, if not better than, the excellent 1991 and 1997 vintages in California and the 1990 and 2000 vintages in France. ■

“Mountain vineyards, classical winemaking, limited production”



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