



Bishop Lamy's Grand Cru: Growing a Slice of History at Bishop's Lodge

Santa Fe, NM, April 8, 2010 – It was not a religious ceremony, though one could say the moment had some spiritual connotations. On a cold November morning last November, Richard Verruni, the managing director of Bishop's Lodge outside Santa Fe, New Mexico, dug a small hole in a patch of earth behind the lodge's main building and planted a small vine cutting.

It was the first planting of what Verruni hopes will become the Bishop's Lodge Vineyard. What gives this simple act extra dimension—and a religious connection—is that the cutting may very well have been carried from France to New Mexico over 150 years ago by Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy, one of the state's most celebrated clergymen and a dedicated horticulturalist who owned this property in Little Tesuque Canyon until his death in 1884.

Verruni believes that this cutting may be from the last survivor of Bishop Lamy's fabled vineyard.

Though it may come as a surprise to some oenophiles, New Mexico once ranked fifth in US wine producing states. The first vines were planted on the banks of the Rio Grande by Capuchin monks in 1629. By the time Bishop Lamy was tending his own vineyard, over a million gallons of wine were being produced in the Land of Enchantment.

Unfortunately, severe flooding of the Rio Grande, prohibition and the popularity of west coast wines reduced local wines to a trickle by the 1960s. In 1969, a rather short-sighted expansion by the Lodge's owners eradicated Lamy's priceless, 120 year old vines.

And this is where things get interesting. In 2006, wine historian Tom Hill interviewed Trey Naylor owner of Santa Fe's Jacona Valley Vineyards. Naylor pointed out an old gnarled vine which he claimed had been planted by previous owner Elmer Townsley. Hill remembered hearing that Townsley had spent hours digging up a grapevine at Bishop's Lodge before the construction had destroyed them. "When I took a look at it, it immediately leapt into my mind—because of the size of the trunk—that must be a Lamy original," Hill states.

Three years later, Verruni and a colleague came across the article that Hill and a co-writer published about the find in local culinary publication. They decided it was time for the famous vine to come home. Though it will take four years for the replanted pinot noir vine to produce, they look forward to the day when the Bishop's wine will once again be drunk in the little valley he called home.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Richard Verruni, please contact:

Rachel Silva - Ballantines PR - 505 216 0889 - Rachel@ballantinespr.com

