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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The story of the heritage vines at Bishop's Lodge

In 1851 Jean Baptiste Lamy was appointed by the Vatican to be the first Bishop of the newly formed Southwest Diocese. After completing his 10-year service in Ohio, he returned to his home in Auvergne, France, for a short visit. He brought back with him cuttings of grapes and fruit trees for his new home in Santa Fe.

According to noted New Mexico historian Paul Kraemer, there is documented evidence these cuttings included grapevines. Pinot Noir is rare in Lamy's Auvergne, but he had friends in the nearby Burgundy region, a possible, maybe likely, source for his grape cuttings.

Lamy is well known for having cultivated gardens near the Cathedral in downtown Santa Fe, but he also planted gardens at his weekend retreat just 3 miles north of Santa Fe, which he named Villa Pintoresca – what is now known as the Bishop's Lodge.

From the booklet "From Retreat to Resort" by Dr. Myra Ellen Jenkins and James R. Thorpe, III, revised and edited by Dr. Thomas Chavez:

"Over the years, as he traversed his diocese, bringing improvements and humane necessities to the territory, Bishop Lamy worked on his little ranch, the Villa Pintoresca, which he had begun to acquire in bits and pieces in the Little Tesuque Canyon in 1853. His lodge, on a little hill with a splendid view of the distant Jemez Mountains, consisted of a small dwelling attached to his tiny, private chapel. He laid out gardens and an orchard of apricot, apple,

peach and pear trees; along with the ditches to bring them water. Lamy enjoyed having visitors out to his lodge and his many guests were invited to partake in the pleasure of his gardens, orchard, fish-pond and the natural serenity of his country estate.“

According to Santa Fe historian and wine writer Tom Hill, a man named Elmer Townsley bought a parcel of land about 20 miles north of Santa Fe in 1967 (now known as Jacona Valley Vineyards.) He planted an assortment of hybrid grapes and in 1968, when he heard that Bishop's Lodge was planning to build some new casitas and would be tearing out some very old grapevines, he and friend Ted Asplund dug up a whole vine with its roughly 100-year-old root system. Elmer returned with this vine and planted it on his Jacona estate. From this single "mother" vine, Elmer took cuttings, propagated them and a small vineyard resulted from which he made his wines.

The Townsley property was purchased by Trey and Blair Naylor in 1998. Seeing Elmer's "mother" vineyard and additional arable acreage inspired Trey. Rather than simply propagating vines from Elmer's mother vineyard, Trey purchased certified Pinot Noir vines from California to plant on the vacant acreage. His first vintage, before these new vines were producing, was in 2003, made from Pinot Noir purchased from Paola D'Andrea in Deming, plus the tiny harvest from the mother vineyard.

Trey picked his first crop from the surviving vines, plus the mother vineyard, to produce his 2004 Estate Pinot Noir, which won a Silver medal at the Southwest Wine Competition in Taos, the highest award given.

Although many pieces of the history puzzle are not in place, it is documented that Bishop Lamy brought vines from France, and that vines taken from the Bishop's Lodge were propagated at the Jacona Valley Vineyard.

Bishop's Lodge is now bringing the 'Mother Vine' back to the resort with a planting ceremony on Wed., Nov. 18, and a wine reception featuring Jacona Valley Vineyards.

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