

Brother and sister act at historic Pope Valley Winery

ST. HELENA STAR By DAVID STONEBERG

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The Pope Valley Winery's holdings include slightly more than 80 acres of vineyards in Pope Valley planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Zinfandel, Sangiovese, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Petite Verdot.
David Stoneberg, Star

David Eakle and his sister Diana Eakle Hawkins are pretty busy – they run two companies and a winery, all in Pope Valley. Their father, Sam, is the sole owner of Eakle Construction & Trucking, which he established in 1974. He runs it with David and Diana.



Diana Eakle Hawkins is general manager and her brother, David Eakle is production director at the Pope Valley Winery, which they bought with their father, Sam, about two years ago. The sister and brother, who are 17 months apart, have always been close.

Bob Rider photo

David and Diana started Eakle Vineyard Management LLC two years ago, to provide vineyard management and farm labor to remote areas of Napa County, and to Lake and Solano counties;

Also in 2017, Sam, David and Diana bought out family partners in the Pope Valley Winery, which was established more than 120 years ago.

David and Diana are third generation from Pope Valley and the fifth generation in the Napa Valley. David is director of production and works with Garrett Cosenza, assistant winemaker. Diana is general manager.



Just a few miles north of Pope Valley on Butts Canyon Road is the Pope Valley Winery, which as the sign says, was established in 1897. It is not a ghost winery, since it has been used as a winery since its founding, even during Prohibition, when wine was sent to Al Capone in Chicago.

David Stoneberg photo

“I remember being at this winery under a previous owner as a little girl, about 4 or 5, running around in the cellar,” Hawkins said. “To us, growing up here, being stewards of the history and this valley, it’s nice (for the history) to be showcased. And we are showcasing the grapes, terroir, vineyards and the experience to other people.”

First stop on a recent spring tour was in the cellar, hand-dug into a hillside.

Swiss immigrant Ed Haus, a blacksmith by trade, bought a farm in Pope Valley in 1882 and opened a blacksmith shop. It took Haus nine years to dig the cellar and build the winery. In 1897, he and his wife established Burgundy Winery & Olive Oil Factory. “It was set up as a three-story, gravity flow winery,” Hawkins said.

The grapes were hauled to the top story and crushed there. They went down a chute to the second story, where the wine was fermented in big redwood tanks and the grapes went down another chute to be put in barrels for aging.

Huge beams used

The cellar and winery includes huge beams that were brought by wagon from the Oat Hill Quicksilver Mine, which borders Napa and Lake counties. The 40-by-60 foot cellar was seismically retrofitted in the early 1990s. “This is where they barrel-aged their wines and where we still barrel-age them today,” Hawkins said.



■ In 1882, Ed Haus bought property in Pope Valley and spent nine years digging a cellar for his gravity-feed winery. Today, the cellar remains in use for the renamed Pope Valley Winery.

Submitted photo

Eakle said it's always challenging to make wines with an older facility, although as a 100-year-old building, the temperature stays pretty consistent at 58 degrees.

"Right now, we are just getting the wines through ML (malolactic fermentation) from the last harvest, because the cellar is so cold," he said, adding, "In the winter, it is even colder."

On that spring day at the end of May, they had pulled barrels out from the cellar to warm them up, so the malolactic fermentation could finish.

The cellar holds 300 barrels and the 2017 vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sangiovese will be released in some 18 months, after being bottled and aged.



A massive oak tree towers over the 120-year-old buildings that make up the Pope Valley Winery, first established in 1897 by Ed and Bertha Haus. David Stoneberg, Star

The 2018 vintage wines, also in barrels in the cellar, will be racked and then aged in barrels, before being bottled and aged.

Today, total production is just less than 5,000 cases a year. The winery's holdings include two estate vineyards in Pope Valley planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Zinfandel, Sangiovese, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Petite Verdot.

During a luncheon and wine tasting, Eakle poured estate wines, either from the four acres of grapes grown on the 40-acre property on Pope Valley Road, or from the Eakle Ranch on Hardin Road, which has 60 acres of grapes planted.

The cool thing about us is we have our own trucking company and people to harvest our fruit, so we literally call the pick. We pick the next day, or that night, drive it down the road five miles, process the fruit there, ferment it and then after that, we have our own bottling facility here, so we are very streamlined in our production," Eakle said. It gives them "the ability to do things when we want to do them, when it is best for our wine, which makes it unique," he added.



By trade, Ed Haus was a blacksmith. In 1882, he bought a farm in Pope Valley and opened his blacksmith shop. His shop and tools remain at the Pope Valley Winery today and are open to guests.

Submitted photo

Hawkins jumped in, "We farm not only for ourselves but for other companies as well. We created the company (Eakle Vineyard Management LLC) because we found we were needing more good labor and more reliable labor." She added that the end product, the wine, is dependent on how the grapes are farmed.

Blacksmith shop

The next stop on the tour was Ed Haus' intact blacksmith shop, complete with tools on the walls. "This is the place where if your wagon wheel broke, or something broke around the winery, you'd fix it," Hawkins said. The smithy had to forge iron to make the repairs. "We're lucky enough to preserve that history and keep it for other people to see," she added.



California's state flower, Golden Poppies, provide a bit of color in a fenced corner on the property of the Pope Valley Winery. David Stoneberg, Star

“This year, we’re hoping to bring in a blacksmith to do our own demonstrations, once or twice,” Hawkins added. “We have a list of different blacksmiths.”

Unusually, Pope Valley has another historic blacksmith shop, owned and maintained by the Napa County Historical Society. It was opened more than 100 years ago by Ed’s brother, Henry, and is next to the Pope Valley Garage and across from the grocery store.

Bootleggers

Ed and Bertha Haus with their two children, Sam and Lillian, on their Pope Valley farm, the site of Ed's blacksmith shop, established in 1882.

Submitted photo

With a winery that's 122 years old, there's bound to be family stories. One of them is from Prohibition. Ed Haus’ son, Sam, served in the military and was friends with Chicago gangster Al Capone. The winery used a horse cart to transport its wines to Napa, where it was put on a train and shipped to Chicago, to be served in Capone’s speakeasies and brothels. Hawkins said Haus sold wine to Capone for a while, “then he realized it was not the best life choice to continue bootlegging for the Capone family.”

Pope Valley natives

Hawkins and Eakle grew up in Pope Valley and are 17 months apart. Both went to California State University, Chico, graduating with bachelor’s degrees in Agricultural Business. Diana is a 2006 grad, David graduated a year later.

“We were always very close growing up,” Eakle said. But, as with all children, the two had squabbles. “I think my Dad had had it one day and he said, ‘Just so you know, when I’m gone, your sister is going to be the only person you can rely on. You can have friends, you can have other people in your life, but the only person you can really, 100 percent rely on, is your sibling.’”

The past and present mix together at the Pope Valley Winery, which was established in 1897 by Ed and Bertha Haus (and called Burgundy Winery.) Today, owners David Eakle and Diana Eakle Hawkins use the same hand-dug cellar to store their wine.

Submitted photo

Sam's advice has stuck with them both. "I remember it to this day," Eakle said. His sister adds, "I tell it to my kids."

Hawkins lives in Middletown with her husband Justin, a Cal Fire bulldozer operator, and three children, Jon, 11, Owen, 9, and Grace, 4.

Eakle lives a short drive from the winery with his wife Kilee Lockwood, their daughter Ryen, 6, son Chet, 5, and dogs KC and Gus.

Enjoy yourself & relax

Pope Valley Winery is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week and no appointments are needed for general wine flights. Hawkins said they offer seated experiences in the second story of the cellar, where wines are paired with cheeses, for example. "We encourage people to bring a picnic lunch, come out, eat, play a game of bocce, grab a glass of wine. And really enjoy themselves, the surrounding vineyards, the history and the experience," Hawkins said.

"I feel like we're the embodiment of how the wine industry started, where you can take a glimpse of how everything began in the Napa Valley. Enjoy yourself, relax, learn about the wines, the grapes and experience the wine and terroir. Experience everything that embodies Napa Valley."

The two are creating a boutique winery, which Eakle defines as making less than 10,000 cases. They work closely with their small staff, which includes Garrett Cosenza, assistant winemaker; Sam Theodorou, tasting room manager; Kenny Werle, wine club manager and Elizabeth Phillips, national sales and marketing director.

From 2008-2015, Eakle was acting winemaker, learning from winery consultant Shaun Richardson. To him making boutique wines is attractive "because you're making smaller lots and you have your hands on every lot. You get any bigger than that and you're losing touch," he said, bringing up questions: Where are the barrels and what fruit is being brought in?

Being smaller, Eakle said he has control over the products. "It's nice to focus on specific lots and specific programs and make that wine to go into that program."

For Hawkins, a boutique winery is about having connections. “We have wine club members who have been members for 10-12 years,” she said. “They have seen the winery grow and David and I grow along with the winery. It is an amazing thing to have these connections with people who support you and love your wine.”

Pope Valley Winery

6613 Pope Valley Road

Pope Valley

707-965-1246

Popevalleywinery.com

Hours 10-5 p.m., daily, closed major holidays

Luncheon wines

-2016 Sangiovese from Eakle Ranch, vines planted in 1997, 150 cases made, \$36;

-2016 Merlot, also from Eakle Ranch, vines planted in 1997, 225 cases made, \$38;

-2016 Petite Verdot, Eakle Ranch, wine club release, \$52;

-2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Pope Valley Winery estate, 150 cases made, \$68;

-2013 Eakle Family Cabernet Sauvignon from Howell Mountain, 48 cases, \$162.

Pope Valley Winery

-Ed Haus purchases a farm in Pope Valley and opens his blacksmith shop in 1882

-Ed and Bertha Haus found Burgundy Winery & Olive Oil Factory in 1897

-During Prohibition, Haus wine is sent to Chicago to be served in Al Capone’s speakeasies and brothels

-The Haus children, Sam and Lily, operate the winery until 1959

-The Devitt Family buys winery in 1972

- Pope Valley residents Jim, Sam and Henry Eakle, Ralf Gerdes, Manny Gomes and Rodney Young buy winery in 1997

-The next generation, David Eakle and Diana Eakle Hawkins with their father Sam buy out winery partners in 2009