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Romance, history unite at Buena Vista wedding

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The newly united Mr. and Mrs. Kyle Haraszthy are jubilant outside the historic champagne cellar where they exchanged vows. Ruggy Joesten officiated at the Oct. 12 ceremony. (Photo by Diane Askeew)

By DIANNE REBER HART / Sonoma Valley Correspondent

Vanessa Wills and Kyle Haraszthy can thank Mother Nature for the perfect weather on their wedding day – and the groom’s great-great-great-grandfather for their picturesque wedding venue at Buena Vista Winery.

With 130 guests and two wedding-attired alpacas in attendance, the couple exchanged vows on a crisp autumn afternoon outside the historic champagne cellar at Buena Vista, the winery founded six generations ago by Count Agoston Haraszthy in 1857.

The bride, a 29-year-old family law attorney from San Mateo, embraced not only her groom but a spot in local history.



The bride and groom hold photos of another Haraszthy couple married at Buena Vista — Kyle Haraszthy’s parents, Vickie and Valjeo “Val” Haraszthy. (Photo by Diane Askeew)

Kyle Haraszthy also is the great-great-great-grandson of Gen. Mariano Vallejo, who founded Sonoma in 1835 and laid the map for the eight-acre Sonoma Plaza, the largest in California.

“I’m incredibly proud,” Wills said. “I want to put my roots down here.”

Much of the couple’s 15-month engagement was devoted to planning every detail of their special day. The Oct. 12 nuptials went off without a hitch.

“I feel like we did a really good job,” said the groom. “It was amazing. It exceeded both Vanessa’s and my high expectations.”

Weddings are a considerable deal for the Haraszthy family. Back in 1863, two of

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Vallejo's daughters married two of the Count's sons in a double ceremony that has been reenacted at Sonoma festivals and celebrations for decades.

Kyle Haraszthy knows the story well. The union of his great-great-grandparents Natalia and Attila Haraszthy brought him to tears as a young boy when he and his brothers, Sean and Evan, appeared in a reenactment on a scorching hot day costumed in authentic clothing of the era.

"It was the hottest day of my life," Haraszthy recalled, and not with the fondest of memories.

Haraszthy, a 30-year-old wine concierge in Marin, said it was touching in many ways to marry at Buena Vista, the oldest premium winery in the state and a California historical landmark.

"We have always had a lot of pride in our family history," he said. "I love being a part of the Sonoma culture. I love my hometown."

His parents, Vickie and Vallejo "Val" Haraszthy, also were married at the winery in the very spot where he and his bride became the latest Mr. and Mrs. Haraszthy. Kyle Haraszthy is the first of his brothers to marry.

His parents, owners of Haraszthy Family Cellars, tied the knot in 1980 on a date that is significant in Sonoma history: June 14, the same date as the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846.

Wills said she loves hearing stories about Sonoma's history over family dinners with the Haraszthys.

"It's just integrated into their family culture," she said.

Kyle Haraszthy, a Sonoma Valley High School graduate who grew up in Boyes Hot Springs, appreciates his unique link to Sonoma history.

Many local residents recognize his Hungarian surname but he's also encountered people outside of town who know Agoston Haraszthy as the pioneering father of California viticulture.

"It happens all over the place," he said.

Wills wasn't among those familiar with Sonoma's founding fathers. When she met Haraszthy at a bar in San Francisco, she was drawn to his good looks and personality.

"He's got a very prince-like presence," she said. "He is Mr. Personality. He really lights up the room. I never met a guy like him."

Haraszthy equally adores his wife. "She is the smartest person I know and the funniest person I know and the most beautiful," he said.

"I fell in love with her rather quickly because she's so amazing."



The couple met four years ago in San Francisco. They are planning a November honeymoon to Sayulita, a romantic beach town in Mexico. (Photo by Diane Askew)



Decked in wedding attire, Coralline grins as Kissy makes a move. (Photo by Greg Chin)

The couple lives in Sonoma and looks forward to one day sharing their wedding story with the next generation of Haraszthys.

"Obviously we'll raise them and teach them about our history. It will be important to bring our children to Buena Vista to soak it all in," said Wills, who plans to take the Haraszthy name.

Her husband is careful to recognize that while his roots run deep within Sonoma's history, they are just one branch of the family tree. He points to his mother's side and to the blending of families with Wills, who is from four generations of attorneys.

"It's just a fraction of my larger family," Haraszthy said.

And about those alpacas decked in wedding veil and tie?

The animals were visiting from Brookfarm Alpacas in Glen Ellen as a reminder of the couple's trip to Machu Picchu, where they encountered numerous llamas.

The alpacas filled in for the llamas, bringing a quirkiness to the historic and romantic wedding that is now part of the Haraszthy family story.

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