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200th birthday bash for Count Haraszthy

Posted on August 23, 2012 by Sun News

What do you get a legend on his 200th birthday? A bottle of wine, for yourself. Count Agoston Haraszthy would have wanted it that way.

The Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee and Buena Vista Winery invite all lovers of Sonoma's rich history and wines to a celebration of Count Agoston Haraszthy's 200th birthday on Saturday, September 1, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Grinstead Amphitheatre in Sonoma Plaza.

This free event is open to all and will feature Hungarian music, dance and culture exhibitions, and a bilingual production of a 20-minute play "The Count of Buena Vista." Additionally, the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Agreement will be officially signed by dignitaries including the mayor of Tokaj, The Count's Hungarian birthplace.

Count Agoston Haraszthy, founder of Buena Vista Winery and known as "The Father of California Viticulture", was born in Pest, Hungary on August 30, 1812. The Count came to California leading a wagon train in 1849, was elected to the California State Assembly, ran the San Francisco Mint, and, in 1857, founded Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma.

Haraszthy saw the great potential in Sonoma for world-class wine and predicted that California would become more famous for wine than for the gold that had originally attracted so many early Californians.

The Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee was created in the spring of 2012, and is comprised of Hungarian-Americans in Sonoma and the Bay Area, as well as lovers of Buena Vista Winery and The Count. The Cities of Sonoma and Tokaj, Hungary have become sister cities, and a delegation from

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Tokaj, led by the Mayor of Tokaj: János Májer, will be in Sonoma to celebrate the Count's Birthday and sign the official documents making Sonoma and Tokaj sister cities.

The Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee is sponsored by Buena Vista Winery, which is also celebrating the near-completion of the extensive restoration of their historic winery by its new owner, Jean-Charles Boisset of Boisset Family Estates. The winery has raised funds to offset the costs of the visit by the Hungarian delegation, and to sponsor future collaborative programs focusing on student exchanges in the wine industry between the two cities.

"I am very grateful for this generous donation from Mr. Boisset," said George Webber, chair of the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee. Webber, who portrays The Count in one of his guises as a historical actor, said "the outpouring of affection for The Count of Buena Vista has been extraordinary, and I am very excited to tell his amazing story to the world in this fun-packed show on Sept. 1."



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