

Sonoma Magazine – September/October 2015

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sonoma

The Heart of Wine Country

From perfect heirloom tomatoes to the grapes that keep Sonoma humming, the land's rich bounty is ours to enjoy.

Harvest Season

ANNUAL TOMATO FESTIVAL
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Christopher Ching

spooky

Wineries Haunted by Their Pasts

Tales of ghostly activity draw visitors in search of chills, thrills

by VIRGINIE BOONE

IN THE ORIGINAL "Ghostbusters" movie, Dr. Peter Venkman, the character played by Bill Murray, tells the mayor of New York City that the metropolis is "headed for a disaster of biblical proportions ... human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together, mass hysteria."

All because of a bunch of ghosts.

Sonoma is probably safe: Who could be bothered to go running around in circles, screaming, when there's so much good food and wine around?

But that doesn't mean Sonoma doesn't have ghost sightings. Current and former winery sites have reported apparitions from time to time, enough to spawn a mini-industry of "ghost tours" led by "experts."

The patron saint of Sonoma haunts is Carla Heine, who wrote a guide on the subject, "Sonoma Ghosts: True Stories of Sonoma's Haunted History," and devised a self-guided tour around town for those looking for ghosts. (A haunted winery is not the same as a ghost winery. The latter is a winery built in the late 1800s and abandoned before or during Prohibition, reduced mostly to rubble over time.)

The brandy tower at Korbel Champagne Cellars in Guerneville, a winery with a history of strange happenings.

the mix

spooky

Sonoma ghostbusters should check out these reportedly haunted places:

SONOMA

Bartholomew Park Winery

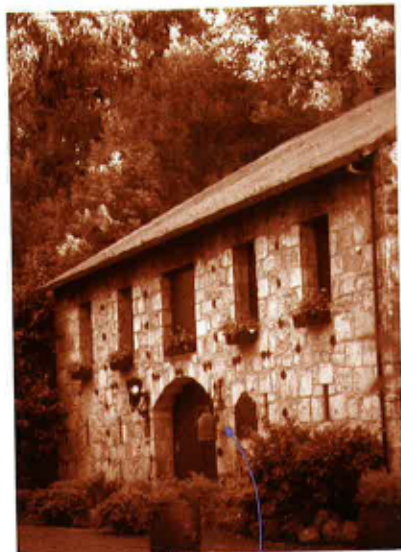
Planted to vines in the 1830s and later purchased by Agoston Haraszthy (also the founder of neighboring Buena Vista Winery), Bartholomew Park was many things, including a women's prison, a hospital and a morgue, before becoming the winery it is today.

In the 1940s, journalist Frank Bartholomew purchased Buena Vista. He sold the winery in 1968 but kept most of the vineyards, turning the old hospital into the Hacienda Cellars winery. It became the Sonoma Valley Wine Museum and Bartholomew Park Winery in 1992.



The museum tells the tale of the site's meandering history, which includes a spooky side. Ghosts are said to congregate in the winery's main building and its basement, which was once a morgue. The story goes that remains of one of the incarcerated women were found in the basement walls during a 1970s earthquake retrofit. Heine says there are at least three resident ghosts. Jeff Dwyer, author of the book "Ghost Hunter's Guide to California's Wine Country," wrote: "A short time after the winery opened, employees heard voices singing in the cellar that once housed prisoners. The choir is heard in the afternoon and again late at night. Hymns are the usual choice."

1000 Vineyard Lane, Sonoma, 707-939-3026, bartpark.com



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Buena Vista Winery

The recently refurbished and spectacular Buena Vista embraces its past of ghostly activity with vigor, hosting haunted cellar parties in its stone-walled Champagne Cellar.

Agoston Haraszthy, "The Count of Buena Vista," founded the winery in 1857 and planted grapevines from cuttings brought in from Europe. He later moved to Nicaragua, where he is said to have met a grisly demise in the maw of an alligator. Haraszthy's remains were never found; might his ghost have returned to roam here?

18000 Old Winery Road, Sonoma, 800-926-1266, buenavistawinery.com

KENWOOD

Chateau St. Jean

In Kenwood, the picturesque, picnic-friendly Chateau St. Jean is known for a wide selection of wines, perhaps none more famous than its red Bordeaux blend, Cinq Cepages.

Also somewhat famous is the property's ghost. Michigan resi-

dents Ernest and Maude Goff built a summer home on the site of what is now the winery and vineyards, taking residence in 1920. Their daughter, Camilla, died in her teen years, and St. Jean employees say her spirit looks after the house (now the Chateau, which is used for administrative purposes, with the visitor center and winery building behind it). The Goffs owned the stately home until 1970; Chateau St. Jean winery was born in 1973.

8555 Sonoma Highway, Kenwood, 877-478-5326, chateaufstjean.com

HEALDSBURG

Dry Creek Vineyard

No less than the California Wine Institute has reported this winery's ghost, a Native American man said to be there because the site was once a Pomo reservation. There's also something fishy going in DCV6, also called Bullock House Vineyard, where a guesthouse is reportedly haunted.

"We used the Bullock House to host trade visitors until 10 years ago or so," said Dry Creek Vineyard's director of marketing and communications, Bill Smart. "Several of those guests reported hearing creaking, footsteps and door-slamming at night. I haven't experienced it, but enough people have that I believe there is paranormal activity there."

The winery no longer puts up guests at Bullock House.

3770 Lambert Bridge Road, Healdsburg, 707-433-1000, drycreekvineyard.com



photos by (left) Clay McLachlan, (center) courtesy Buena Vista Winery, (above) courtesy Chateau St. Jean