



Wine on Men's Journal  · [Follow](#)

verified publisher · 332 followers

 Calistoga

An Historic Old Vine Paradise Nestled Into The Hills of Calistoga Enters New Chapter

By Matthew Kaner | Will Travel For Wine, 2024-10-03



Photo by Jimmy Hayes & verbar JBH Photo

Once in a great while we come across a project with a trifecta of success factors: location, story, and personnel. When I had the chance to meet Felicia Woytak & Steven Rasmussen, not only did I fall in love with the property they purchased and became the conservators for, but also with the people themselves. They knew they had something special on their hands. Something worth investing in, something necessary to protect.



Graeme MacDonald, Felicia Woytak, and Steven Rasmussen

[Photo by Jimmy Hayes & verbar JBH Photo](#)

On October 8th, Felicia & Steve drop their first bottlings under their Palisades Canyon label from their Calistoga estate vineyard. The trio of wines, a 2021 Chenin Blanc (SRP: \$75), 2021 Petite Sirah (SRP: \$75), and 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (SRP: \$150), are crafted by fourth-generation Napa winemaker, grape-grower, and historian Graeme MacDonald.



Trio of 2021 vintage for the first release of Palisades Canyon

Courtesy of Palisades Canyon

Nestled in a narrow canyon at the base of The Palisades cliffs east of Calistoga, the 17.5-acre CCOF-certified organic Palisades Vineyard, home to [Palisades Canyon Wines](#), is surrounded by thousands of acres of rugged, natural splendor. After searching the Napa Valley for over ten years for a place to make their own, in 2015, Felicia Woytak found the 796-acre estate property with an historic dry-farmed vineyard and an 1881 farmhouse standing opposite a ghost winery—Bonded Winery No. 118. She fell in love.



Bonded Winery No. 118, on property at Palisades Vineyard

Photo by Jimmy Hayes & verbar JBH Photo

Palisades Canyon's viticultural legacy dates to the 1870s when James Horn, a Scottish immigrant, first planted a vineyard on the site. Weathering the tumultuous late 19th Century when phylloxera devastated Napa Valley vines, the vineyard changed hands many times until 1906 when Domenico and Gilda Barberis, immigrants from Italy, bought the property. The Barberis family extended the vineyard and planted prune plums, calling the site Palisades Vineyard. In 1915, they built Bonded Winery No. 118 and made wine there before (and quietly during) Prohibition. In 1932, just ten months before the end of Prohibition, the "Revenuers" smashed their tanks, revoked their bond, and shut down the winery. Their son, Frank Barberis, continued to farm the vineyard until 1992, when Anne Carver bought the property. Anne and her husband Denis Sutro grew grapes, made wine, and preserved and restored the old farm buildings. Together with neighbors, Anne and Denis protected 528 acres of their wilderness parcels with a conservation easement, ensuring that future generations will continue to enjoy their natural beauty.



Photo by Jimmy Hayes & verbar JBH Photo

Felicia and Steve purchased the vineyard in 2015, made it their home, and began the conversion to organic & heritage farming. Avid hikers, their history of rugged outdoor experiences proved excellent preparation for stewarding such a place. In the steep terrain around the vineyard, they have cleared forgotten fire roads and built new hiking trails to welcome neighbors and the community. Along Horns Creek, they have planted oaks and hedge rows of native, pollinator-friendly plants. A new goat herd and llama serve a dual purpose—grazing for wildfire prevention and charming vineyard guests. I had an amazing time hitting the property with Steve on a four-wheeler, learning about the history, seeing old mine-shafts, and getting a sense of the greater purpose that the land itself plays for both Felicia & Steve.

Under the banner of the [Horns Canyon Outdoor Education Project](#), Steve has teamed up with the education staff of Napa County Resource Conservation District to bring students from local schools to the property to study geology, farming, and land conservation. He also leads wildflower walks on the canyon trails with the Napa County branch of the California Native Plant Society.



Photo by Jimmy Hayes & verbar JBH Photo

Visit palisadescanyonwines.com to learn more about the property and wines. Get your bottles starting Tuesday, October 8th.