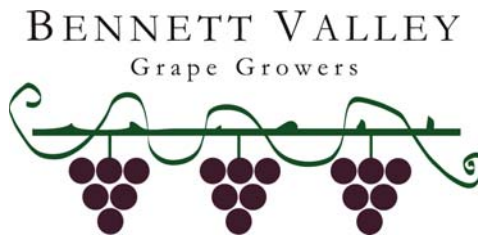


# BENNETT VALLEY

Grape Growers





**BENNETT VALLEY GRAPE GROWERS  
APPELLATION FACTS  
MAY, 12, 2004**

**Our Main Mission:**

To promote Bennett Valley as a premiere source of premium wine grapes and wines.  
To help members improve grape and wine quality.  
To promote good stewardship of the land.

**Appellation Facts:**

Location: 45 Miles Northeast of San Francisco  
Sonoma County's Newest Appellation  
Total Acres in Appellation: 8,140                      Estimated Acres in Vineyard: 700  
Number of Wineries: 4                                      Number of Growers: 36

**Percentage of Acreage Planted by Varietal based on BVGG Membership Data:**

Merlot: 42.5%                      Pinot Noir: 9.0%                      Syrah: 9.6%  
Chardonnay: 24.0%                      Other/Non-bearing: 14.9%

**Effective Date of Approval:** December 29, 2003

**Climatic Characteristics:** Consistent marine influence through out the growing season. A gap in the mountains permits cool fog and wind to pour into the valley moderating summer temperatures and creating conditions ideal for the production of ultra premium, cool climate wine grapes.

**Physical Geography:** The appellation boundaries roughly correspond to the Matanzas Creek watershed. The valley, which is more accurately described as an alluvial bench, is surrounded by three mountains, Taylor to the West, Bennett to the East and Sonoma to the South. Soils are varied, but many are rocky and volcanic in origin. Elevations range from 250 to 1,850 feet with most vineyards located between 500 and 600 feet.

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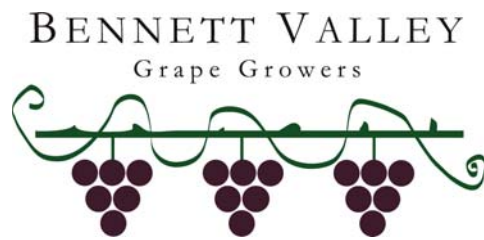
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## BENNETT VALLEY GRAPE GROWERS MISSION STATEMENT

- Promote Bennett Valley as a premiere source of premium wine grapes and wines.
- Emphasize the unique climate, topography, soils, history and people.
- Help members improve grape and wine quality.
- Facilitate education and the dissemination of information.
- Promote good stewardship of the land.
- Encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable practices.
- Encourage practices that respect the entire community.

## OUR VALLEY'S UNIQUE QUALITIES

- Bennett valley is nestled between three mountainous peaks; Taylor mountain too the west. Sonoma Mountain to the south, and what are known today as Bennett Peak and Bennett ridge to the east. For countless years ash accumulated on the valley floor from the volcanic peaks making the land in Bennett Valley a perfect environment for growing world-class wine grapes.
- The climate of Bennett Valley is considered a cool climate-growing zone with greater marine influence due to the proximity of the Crane Canyon/Grange Road wind gap. The result is we get quite a bit of fog in the early morning that greatly contributes to ideal grape growing conditions.
- Quality wine growing has a long history in the valley dating back to the mid 1800's. In 1862 a man named Isaac De Turk grew grapes on land he acquired from James N. Bennett and named his winery Belle Mount.
- The appellation consists of only 650 currently planted acres making Bennett Valley one of the smaller appellations in California. The growers have a passionate commitment to quality over quantity that reflects itself in the wines being made from our grapes.
- The grapes from Bennett valley can be found in some of the finest wines produced in California. Matanzas Creek is one of the early wineries to settle in our valley and their wines have won awards worldwide.
- The valley itself is one of the most peaceful, serene and unspoiled of all wine growing regions. Travel guides to describe our valley commonly use words such as "bucolic and pastoral". The people of the valley have a great respect for this treasure and work on protecting its character and feel.



## **BENNETT VALLEY'S RICH HISTORY**

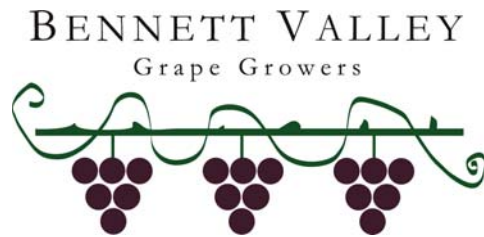
Bennett Valley is nestled between three mountainous peaks; Taylor Mountain to the west, Sonoma Mountain to the south, and what are known today as Bennett Peak and Bennett Ridge to the east. For countless years ash accumulated on the valley floor from these volcanic peaks making the land in Bennett Valley a perfect place for growing premium wine grapes.

This land made food sources plentiful, attracting many Native American Tribes to the area such as the Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo Tribes. For these first natives, the valley seemed to have mystical importance as hinted at by the name of the stream that flows southeast from what later became Bennett Peak into Sonoma Valley... "Yulupa". This Native American word translates most closely into English as "sacred" or "magical". However the magic of the area, the "Yulupa", could not prevail over a catastrophic epidemic of smallpox introduced by the arriving Spanish soldiers. By 1837 most of the native people had been wiped out.

By the early part of the 19th century, both Spanish settlers from the south and Russian settlers from the north were pushing their way into Sonoma County. Around 1834 General Mariano Vallejo was ordered north to rule the territory above San Francisco in an effort to prevent the Russian expansion. The generous land grants by Vallejo in the areas of Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, and Kennwood prompted even greater settlement of Sonoma County. Some of the land grants went to immigrants from the United States who often married into Mexican Families. Their major occupation of the area is indicated by the name given another stream in Bennett Valley... "Matanzas"... flowing north from a source on Sonoma Mountain. The name Matanzas was a Spanish derivation given to a mobile slaughterer who would make house calls to local farms in the valley.

A decade after Vallejo's arrival, people began settling here in large numbers due to the 1846 Bear Flag Revolt and the 1849 Gold Rush. Among these immigrants was a man from Missouri named James N. Bennett. Making the journey on a wagon train, James Bennett first arrived as an 1849 pioneer, coming over Sonoma Mountain to first see the valley. Unfortunately his daughter who was ill with Typhoid Fever died, so Bennett buried her and decided to settle in the valley, probably fairly close to the high peak called "Yulupa" on the property he purchased from General Vallejo. Eventually that same mountain peak and the entire valley were named "Bennett" after him. James Bennett became a prosperous citizen and was elected to the State Assembly where he introduced the bill that made Santa Rosa the county seat in 1854. Very little is known otherwise about James N. Bennett.

In the early 1850's, Bennett Valley saw an influx of settlers who quickly took to farming. The few remaining Indians soon disappeared, and by 1884 Bennett Valley had become a highly productive agricultural region. To quote an October 29, 1949 article in the Press Democrat titled "Picturesque Bennett Valley Scene of Farm Prosperity", "Bennett Valley's rich soil on the valley floor proper and on the lower rolling slopes of the hills drew settlers speedily. Men and women who came in search of gold in the mines found agricultural gold in the sunshine drenched valley." The population of 300 in Bennett Valley engaged in farming activities that produced such crops as grapes, apples, hay, wheat, oats, barley, and all types of animal husbandry. As you tour Bennett Valley today you are reminded of many of its early settlers. Names like Talbot, Mitchell, Guenza, Peracca, and Jamison can be seen gracing street signs. In 1862 a man named Isaac DeTurk grew grapes on land he acquired from James N. Bennett and named his winery Belle Mount. However in the 1890's many of the grapes were attacked and destroyed by phylloxera. Coupled with the passage of prohibition laws, grape growing pretty much died in the valley and the land was used for other agricultural purposes. Once prohibition was repealed,



winemaking again prospered in Sonoma County. Bennett Valley is blessed with an ideal combination of fertile soil and temperate climate for growing grapes. Today we see many vineyards gracing the land throughout the valley including Matanzas Creek Vineyard and the vineyards at Jackson Park Ranch.

Farming was not the only activity in historical Bennett Valley at that time. A settler by the name of John Shakleford Taylor settled in Bennett Valley in 1853 and owned 2,000 acres on what we now call Taylor Mountain. Taylor's land holdings were the largest under one name in the County at that time, and were some of the richest and most productive valley lands in Santa Rosa. Besides operating a dairy and stock ranch for over 50 years, he mined coal from several mines, and grew both Zinfandel and Mission grapes. The one thing Taylor was probably best known for was his "White Sulphur Springs" resort. Later re-named "The Kawana Springs Resort", Taylor's carriages would meet the train from San Francisco several times a day at the northwestern depot at the west end of Fourth Street, taking weary travelers to his large hotel to rest and relax in the natural springs. Unfortunately Mother Nature played a role in deactivating all but one of the springs after the 1906 earthquake. Taylor went on to play an instrumental role in getting the first racetrack started for the county fair on property adjacent to his. John Shakleford Taylor died in 1927 at the age of 99.

As the valley population grew, so too did the need for education. In 1851 Bennett Valley residents started their own school district and called it the Santa Rosa School District. Ironically, when Santa Rosa started its own school district about 4 years later, they named their district the "Courthouse District". The first school building built by the Bennett Valley community was "near the bridge at Matanzas Creek" according to the 1949 Press Democrat article quoted earlier. A few years later the "Strawberry School" was started at the other end of the valley.

The original settlers who founded Bennett Valley may be gone today, but their legacy lives on in many structures still present in the Valley today. Driving down Grange road you will find the oldest standing active Grange Hall in the United States. Built in 1873 from the cooperative efforts of Bennett Valley neighbors, the Grange Hall stands as a monument to community strength and unity. To this day residents of Bennett Valley congregate at the Grange for festive events and informative community forums the same way they did over 100 years ago.

Undoubtedly, Bennett Valley is one of the most beautiful places on earth and residents of the valley will be the first to tell you. Preserving the rural heritage of Bennett Valley has been an ongoing commitment of its residents. In 1977 the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors established "The Bennett Valley Study District" in response to growing concerns by residents about the direction land development was taking in the valley, such as the proposal of a trailer park community and convenience stores. For improved land planning, the specific needs of this particular area needed to be identified and described, as a supplement to the Sonoma County General Plan. An eleven-member Citizens Committee was appointed in 1978 to work with county planning and the citizens of Bennett Valley to develop what is now called the "Bennett Valley Area Plan". Even though the Citizens Committee no longer exists to review proposed development and property uses in the Valley, the Bennett Valley Area Plan stands as the foundation for the preservation of the Valley's rural heritage.

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